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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

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Marxism Today

Vol. 6 No. 12

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Editorial Comments

IN that critical week at the end of October, when it seemed that at any moment our island and indeed the world, might be engulfed in nuclear war, the deep justice of the Communist policy of peaceful coexistence was brought home the hard way to the people of Britain.

We know that the peaceful coexistence of the two social systems of Socialism and Capitalism will not just come for the asking. We know that imperialism and, above all, American imperialism, is aggressive, and that the securing of peace will depend, in the last analysis, on the strength, unity and vigilance of all the forces of peace.

But peaceful coexistence also means willingness to negotiate and to recognise the need of concessions on *both* sides.

Hundreds of millions of people felt the deepest sense of gratitude to the Soviet Union for their combination of firmness and conciliation, of responsibility and reason, which at the critical moment when the lives of hundreds of millions hung in the balance, saved the world from a thermo-nuclear war and Cuba from invasion.

Much still remains to be done to insure the independence of Cuba, to negotiate settlements in the areas of dispute of the world, and, above all, to begin the process of disarmament. We are sure that more people than ever before in Britain saw in that critical week the suicidal folly of the maintenance of U.S. bases in Britain. Many many people who have not yet taken part or sides in politics came to see whence came the initiative for aggression and whence the initiative for negotiation, and to see the need to join the fight for peaceful coexistence.

For Peace on the Sino-Indian Border

The people of the world need peaceful coexistence. All the more senseless, tragic and unnecessary is the conflict that has been taking place on the Chinese-Indian border.

Only one group can gain from it—the forces of imperialism, who, with American, British and West German reaction at their head, are busy fanning the flames and trying to enlarge the struggle into a major conflagration.

All of the non-aligned and neutral nations have been urging peace, and so, with the deepest feelings, do the people who desire peace all over the world. The longer the conflict persists the more difficult a peaceful solution becomes.

There is only one way out that accords with the policy of peaceful coexistence and the interests of *all* peoples, and that is a cease-fire and a settlement by negotiation. There *is* not and *never* has been a definitive frontier. The very frontier problem is a legacy of imperialism.

As we go to press (November 22nd), the Chinese Government's decision for a cease-fire and for the withdrawal of all Chinese troops to positions 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control on November 7th, 1959, offers fresh hopes for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. All hope that this offer will meet with a positive response from the Indian Government and people.

Those who want peace desire above all that the representatives of the Chinese and Indian peoples should come together in conference, find an acceptable solution through compromise and mutual concession, lay the basis for the renewed friendship of two great nations, and strengthen the cause of peace in Asia and the world.

The War that Still Rages

War—"local war", "undeclared war", as the Pentagon calls it—is still raging in South Vietnam, eight years after the signing of the Geneva agreements of 1954 which were to restore peace in Indo-China. Reports in the American press say that there are 10,000 American troops in South Vietnam; that since 1954 the United States has given "aid" to the Diem regime amounting to 2,750 million dollars; that Diem's regular army numbers 400,000. These facts make it clear that it is the United States which is continuing the French colonialist "dirty war".

Their aims go beyond the domination of South Vietnam: American politicians and generals speak of using South Vietnam as a base for attacks on the Vietnam Democratic Republic and China. This is not a "local war": at any moment it can develop into an international conflict. In "cleaning up" operations Diem and the Americans have killed over 100,000 of the population; 350,000 are in prison; 700,000 others are in concentration camps described as "strategic villages".

Imperialist propaganda alleges North Vietnam aggression. But the planes which bomb villages, the troops who burn down villages to force the peasants into concentration camps, do not come

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from North Vietnam. Where there is oppression, the people fight, as the South Vietnamese are fighting in their National Liberation Front. They fight against the Diem terror and oppression, against the American intervention, and for the application of the Geneva agreements, a coalition government of national independence, peace, neutrality and democracy; for the peaceful unification of Vietnam.

The British Government is trying to cover up the criminal American policy, which is all the more serious because Britain is one of the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954. It is vital for the Labour movement and all progressives to understand their share of responsibility for this situation, and to do all they can to end the war and the American intervention, and to ensure that the Geneva agreements are respected, bringing peace and self-determination to the people of South Vietnam.

The Role of the Trade Unions

It is clear that British trade unions have reached a stage, when their future organisation and policy is a matter for public debate, and the "experts" are as usual rushing in to make their contribution.

There are two favourite views of the role of the unions so far as these experts are concerned. The first is that they really do very little to raise wages, that any wage increases that have taken place would, in fact, have been brought about by the operations of the market. The second view is that the trade unions are the very devil, constantly pushing wages up far beyond the rise of productivity and that they are mainly responsible for the steadily increasing prices which have plagued capitalist society in recent years.

These view were discussed in a recent Third Programme talk by Hugh Clegg of Nuffield College who did not come down strongly on either side but who insisted that the unions were useful for "even if it could be shown that unions have little effect on wages, the workers would continue to value them as a method of regulating relationships between people in industry, and as the channel they wish wage changes to pass through, whatever the changes may be". We doubt if this conception of the role of trade unions would inspire anyone to join them, let alone agree to the sacrifices that the building of powerful unions invariably entails. The working class adheres to trade unionism because throughout the years it has defended living standards against capitalist attempts to cut them down, and because it has managed to squeeze for the workers a small share in any prosperity that industry may be enjoying.

Mr. Clegg tells us that "many economists still argue that wages cannot be greatly advanced at the expense of profits without setting in motion corrective mechanisms which will restore the original relationship". However, this was said at a time when the employers everywhere are complaining about a profit squeeze. Here is Mr. John Brittain of *The Observer* writing of the wages situation in the Common Market: "Wages have been rising a good deal faster than output. But increased competition—partly due to the Common Market itself, and partly to a changed climate in world trade—has made it difficult for business men to pass all their cost increases to the customer." We would say that it is "the changing climate of world trade" i.e., the incipient depression that has made the main contribution to this result. The conclusion to be drawn is that there are times when capitalist industry is not exactly booming, when nevertheless strong trade unionism can force increases in wages which the capitalists cannot easily shift on to prices. Such a situation obtains in some major capitalist countries today.

The capitalists in those countries are not waiting for the operation of the "corrective mechanism" which Mr. Clegg mentions. By means of various forms of state intervention against the unions, usually described as a wages policy, they seek to keep wages from rising.

Mr. Clegg says: "If the unions have little effect on wages it might seem that having a wages policy would be a waste of time. But this is not so. So long as unions have some effect on wages, even if it is only a temporary effect, there is a sound case for a wages policy. *If we obtained nothing more from it than an agreed means of applying a check to wage increases for relatively short periods of one or two years at a time, it would still be a valuable instrument of economic policy.*" [Italics ours.]

Can you beat it? Trade unions are to be transformed into organisations co-operating with the employers, in order to apply "a check to wage increases for relatively short periods of one to two years at a time". This is the function that employers expect their own federations to carry out, but why on earth should *workers* be expected to support trade unions to co-operate with employers to achieve this aim we are not told.

Mr. Clegg does not mention the role of unions when labour is becoming more productive, in an industry or group of industries, or in the economy as a whole. In such a situation the employers would appropriate *all* the results of increased productivity, if the unions were not maintaining increasing pressure to raise wages. If the unions

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could be persuaded to hold off, all that would happen is that profits would advance relatively to wages.

What the unions must concentrate on, is not ways and means of co-operating with the employers and the state in holding down wages but the strengthening of their organisations so that they can achieve the most complete unity and exert the utmost pressure on the employers and government.

Common Market—Common Currency

Since the Llandudno Conference of the Conservatives an immense mass of literature has issued from that party depicting the Common Market as an earthly paradise. All kinds of advantages will come to Britain, and really the British Parliament will not be restricted in any way, we are told. The Common Market is being sold with all the élan of unscrupulous ad-men advertising the latest detergent.

Unfortunately for the Tories this is the time chosen by the Economic Commission of the Common Market to issue what is called "the Communities Programme of Action during the Second Stage" (1962-65 inclusive). This programme calls for "a gradual merger of national economic policies . . . such integration is a suitable instrument of the political union of Europe in a limited sphere, that of the economy."

So it is made crystal clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is to be a Common Market economic policy, to which all governments and parliaments will conform and there is to be political union, in which all participating states will sink their sovereignty. The main proposal is for a monetary union in the Common Market leading up to the formation of a federal banking system, and *a common currency*.

The Commission is for rushing ahead with these proposals, which could be cut and dried before Britain enters the Market. The favourite Conservative argument that Britain will have a large share in shaping the institutions of the market is being refuted before our very eyes.

Commenting on the Commission's programme, the *Statist* says:

> "The proposals if accepted would vault nearly all the hurdles towards the finishing post of full political federation. *A common currency implies a common budget, a common fiscal system, in fact the abrogation of sovereignty in all facets* of economic policy." (2nd November 1962.)

Robert Marjolin, the French Vice-President of the Commission, made reassuring noises that "none of these proposals would infringe the rights of governments and central banks to take decisions they judged to be in the national interests". But the *Statist* brushes this aside with the remark that

> "if the Commission is in earnest about the ultimate objective of a common currency, little importance can be attached to this reassurance. A common currency is the symbol of full political federation, as even so technically unversed a man as General de Gaulle will quickly realise." (November 2nd, 1962.)

Britain is, however, the centre of another monetary union, the sterling area. It cannot be a head of the sterling area, with the common currency of the pound sterling, and a member of the federal banking system which will function on the Common Market. That is why the Common Market press in Britain is deliberately playing down the report of the Commission. If Britain is in the Common Market it will have to accept a common currency if the other states want it, then good-bye to the sterling area, an event that would be followed by the disruption of the economies of the Dominions.

Professor Eysenck's I.Q.

During the last few months the bookshops have been full of Professor Eysenck's popular Pelican *Know Your Own I.Q.* Including a brief 30-page introduction discussing the theory behind the tests (such as it is), the book consists largely of eight actual tests, compiled by the author, which purport to enable the reader to measure his own I.Q., and so to establish how intelligent (or stupid) he is.

The book is clearly intended to cash in on the wide interest in puzzle-solving shown by the popularity of T.V. programmes such as "Pencil and Paper", and "Pit Your Wits", said to have an audience of 14 million.

Now there is no reason why people should not enjoy solving puzzles, but it is quite another thing when one of the leading psychologists in this country uses this interest to propagate theories about the nature of intelligence which can only be described as crude, evasive, dogmatic and obsolete. This in itself would not matter so much if it were not the case that the theory and practice of mental testing underlies (and is the main instrument) in buttressing a segregated and divided system of education. These theories are, in fact, the chief ideological weapons in the hands of those who wish to hold back educational advance and limit educational opportunity.

All the hoary old ideas about "intelligence" are here paraded as if they were eternal truths applying to any society. The idea that a child's intellectual capacity is largely inherited receives

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Eysenck's full support, in spite of the fact that most leading educational psychologists now stress the role of the environment. He seems fully to accept an entirely arbitrary theory about the distribution of intelligence which cannot be shown to have any scientific justification whatever; indeed, he simply ignores this crucial question. For him "intelligence" exists as "a very subjective but nevertheless real entity"—a most question-begging formulation which can be reasonably accurately measured by tests which have—in spite of qualifications, considerable predictive power. In spite of the fact that intelligence tests "are not based on any very sound scientific principles" they are, he says, "outstandingly successful in their practical application."

This is indeed an astonishing claim to make in 1962; it is precisely because of their practical failure as predictors of academic success in the eleven plus, a failure for which more and more evidence is piling up every year, that many Local Authorities, are now abandoning their use, and several moving entirely away from the idea of early selection through development of forms of comprehensive education.

Eysenck has found a new argument for the scientific failure of mental tests—psychologists have not had *time* to develop a "sound theoretical basis". At a time when psychologists are at last beginning to study mental processes as *processes* he still pins his faith to the static psychometric approach, holding that intelligence testing will *undoubtedly* lead to a better understanding of mental processes "and indeed in many ways it has already done so". This latter remark is quite untrue. Not only has it consistently diverted energy and resources away from their scientific study, but developed instead a false pseudo-scientific mythology which has held up scientific advance and done untold practical harm. The trend now is away from this sterile approach. It is a pity that Dr. Eysenck should feel it necessary to give these ideas wider currency.

To readers we would say, enjoy the puzzles, but don't imagine that Dr. Eysenck's tests measure the intelligence of you, or your children, or your grand-parents. If they measure anything it is a lack of a certain "something" in Dr. Eysenck himself.

Theoretical Problems of Planning

In connection with a recent discussion taking place in *Pravda*, several commentators (including "Monitor", the new Soviet "expert" of *The Times*) have made a considerable fuss about an alleged "return to the profit-principle" in Soviet economy. Those who talk like this are evidently rather weak in background-knowledge of the Soviet economy and of its development over the years. Actually the profit-principle as such is nothing new in the running of Soviet industry. Ever since the introduction of the system of so-called *khozraschot* in the late '20's (providing a sort of cost-accounting-plus-balance-sheet framework to the operational discretion allowed to the industrial enterprise and its management), the objective of making a profit (and avoiding a loss) has been emphasised. Moreover, the system of incentives to the enterprise (including bonuses to the staff) has been partly linked to the amount of so-called "above-plan profit" that an enterprise makes—this now for a number of years dating back to pre-war days.

The point is that in the Soviet set-up this profit-principle operates within a particular framework —a framework very different from "free-market" capitalism; hence its results are different and its economic significance is radically different. In the first place it has the character of a collective incentive to the enterprise as a whole, even if individual bonuses are paid from it. Secondly, and even more important, selling-prices are *pre-fixed*, so that an enterprise cannot make profits by raising prices, only by being more efficient and reducing costs. Thirdly, an enterprise cannot produce anything it likes—it is harnessed to the requirements of the output-plan.

The only question has been as to the order of importance to be assigned to the making of a profit (if you like, to the balance-sheet position of an enterprise) in the system of both collective and individual incentives to a factory or enterprise and its personnel. In the past there have been bonuses geared to other indices of achievement, such as reaching the overall plan-target for output, fulfilling the target-increases for labour-productivity, and other so-called "qualitative indices" (such as saving on raw materials); and up-to-now incentives geared to "above-plan profit" have had a relatively subordinate place.

All of these indices have their defects (which were emphasised in the discussions of five years ago), in particular those concerned with overall output-targets. (For example, if the target is fixed in value-terms, it may encourage a concentration on lines and models with an expensive raw material content; if fixed in weight, it creates a bias in favour of bulky and heavy styles and lines, and tends to distort the "output-assortment" in this direction; and so on.) What is specifically new in the proposals of Professor Lieberman of Kharkhov (who started the *Pravda* discussion with an article on "Plan, Profit, Premia") is that he proposes to use the amount of profit made by an

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enterprise over a period as the *main* index, in relation to enterprise-incentives; and moreover in doing so to relate profit to the total capital ("basic and turnover funds") entrusted to an enterprise. The object of the latter is to encourage managements to make sparing and efficient use of technical equipment, to avoid applying for unnecessary equipment and unduly expensive investments and keeping wastefully large reserves of capacity unused.

It is also hoped that the change will reduce the temptation to managements to use their influence to get plan-targets set for themselves that are lenient and relatively easy to fulfil. Profit, as constituting the financial-result of all the activities of the industrial unit, is, in Lieberman's opinion, the best single and synthetic index, whereby the interests of the enterprise and of society as a whole can be harmonised. He speaks of the necessity of providing "only a leading decisive index, and in this framework giving to the managers greater rights and possibilities for economic manœuvring".

The present position is that Gosplan organised a special conference in September to discuss the Lieberman-proposals; following which it has been decided to carry out an experimental test of these proposals in a series of enterprises in various branches of industry, as a preliminary to deciding upon its extensive introduction.

Books to Come

I know that our readers like to have some idea of what Marxist books can be expected in the next months ahead.

Lawrence and Wishart have a very interesting programme of new books for the year 1963. Early in the year there will be a new book by R. Palme Dutt, based on the lectures which he gave last April in Moscow University. Under the title of *Problems of Contemporary History* it treats of such questions as the cold war, the prospects of Socialism in the West, and how far Marxist predictions in the past have been confirmed or rejected by events.

Around the same period, they are publishing, under the title of *The Challenge of Marxism* (edited by Brian Simon) a collection of essays by John Gollan, J. R. Campbell, Arnold Kettle, A. L. Morton and others dealing with such subjects as Marxism and democracy, Marxism and science, Marxism and the intellectual etc.

On philosophy, there will be a translation of a book by the Polish philosopher Adam Schaff—*A Philosophy of Man,* which has already given rise to considerable discussion in many countries. It treats of problems like Marxism and existentialism, the aims and future of man, man's happiness and purpose in life. A new edition will be published of Maurice Cornforth's *Theory of Knowledge,* and a reprint of the *Lectures on Marxist Philosophy* by David Guest, one of the brilliant young Marxists of the thirties who was killed in the Spanish civil war (it originally appeared under the title of "Dialectical Materialism").

On directly political subjects there will be a third book on Africa—*Africa, the Way Ahead*—by Jack Woddis, an account of the recent record of the Tory Government—*The Tory Decade*—by Alan Brown, and, of very great importance, a new book by D. N. Pritt—*The Labour Government,* 1945-51. This is a very full history of the record of the post-war Labour Government, what it did and what it failed to do, of the heroes and the villains of the piece.

There will be a new edition of Dr. Sam Lilley's excellent history of technology—*Men, Machines and History,* that has long been out of print; a new and revised edition of John Eaton's *Textbook on Political Economy;* a new collection of essays by Christopher Caudwell (selected from his previous works) under the title *The Concept of Freedom* (incidentally this will contain some chapters from his *Crisis in Physics* which has long been out of print).

Several booklets will be published at prices from 3s. 6d. to 5s., including an economic essay by Maurice Dobb on *Industrial Growth in Underdeveloped Countries;* a booklet on *The Communist Party* by John Mahon; a short history of the Spanish War, 1936-39; and a short work by A. L. Morton on *Socialism in Britain.*

There will also be some new novels including a first novel about Lancashire in the thirties by Brian Almond.

Of course there will be a number of Marxist books published by other publishers—and we will try to keep you informed of them from time to time in these Notes.

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Problems of Contemporary Capitalism

Sam Aaronovitch and John Eaton

Between August 24 and September 3 of this year a Conference took place in Moscow on the theme of Problems of Contemporary Capitalism. It was organised by the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (of the USSR Academy of Sciences) and the Editorial Board of "World Marxist Review". John Eaton and Sam Aaronovitch attended this Conference and have prepared the following article for "Marxism Today". John Eaton is responsible for the Introduction and first section and Sam Aaronovitch for the second and third sections. They emphasise that this is not intended so much as a report as a series of notes touching on some of the outstanding questions which arose in the discussions.

INTRODUCTION

IT should be emphasised that this was a discussion, an exchange of views, and was not a conference setting out to express or endorse a particular set of opinions formulated in resolutions. The Agenda was organised under the following headings:

1. State Monopoly Capitalism and the present policy of the Imperialist countries.
2. The Common Market and the economic and political problems associated with it.
3. The position and struggle of the working class in the conditions of modern capitalism.

There were, apart from the Soviet comrades participating in and making arrangements for the discussions, about 40 representatives from 22 other countries. There were representatives from Canada, U.S.A., South America, Japan and Indonesia, but the rest—that is the bulk of the representation—were from European countries.

A number of representatives submitted written memoranda prior to the discussions. We submitted memoranda on State Monopoly Capitalism and on the Position and Struggles of the Working Class, and drew the attention of the Conference to the article on the Common Market by J. R. Campbell in the July issue of *World Marxist Review*. This issue also contained a memorandum by the Soviet Institute of World Economy on *Integration of Monopoly Capital—Some New Developments*. A fuller 100-page memorandum was put before the meeting by Comrade A. A. Arzumanyan, the Director of the Soviet Institute of World Economy. This report organised under the following headings: "Monopolies dominant force of capitalist economy", "State Monopoly Capitalism", "Imperialist integration in Western Europe", "Greater economic instability of Capitalism", "Upsurge of Class struggle", "Some questions concerning the National Liberation struggle", "The Foreign policy of present day Capitalism", provided the main point of reference for the discussions. The spirit of the debate was lively and free. The spirit of the discussions was well expressed by one comrade who said "Marxism embraces life and need never fear to face facts frankly. This is a discussion at which our views are formulated without fear."

The discussion is being reported in the November issue of *World Marxist Review* and, early in the New Year, a book containing the main Reports and Speeches will be published also.

In taking up some of the main points arising out of these fifty hours or so of discussion it is convenient to consider items 1 and 3, that is "State Monopoly Capitalism" and "the Struggle of the Working Class", together. This report, therefore, is arranged under the following broad headings: State Monopoly Capitalism and the Struggles of the Workers; The Common Market; Conclusions for Britain and the Democratic Alternative. (It should be noted that a whole range of important problems concerning countries struggling for their national and economic independence were not included in the central focus of the agenda. It is understood that *World Marxist Review* is shortly arranging some special discussions on these topics.)

(I). STATE MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND THE STRUGGLES OF THE WORKERS

Comrade Arzumanyan in the introduction to his Report stated:

> "Society has entered an epoch in which the main content of history is mankind's transition

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from capitalism to socialism . . . a great struggle and competition are on between the old and the new world. New laws make their appearance and unless these are taken into account a great deal of what is going on within the capitalist world cannot be understood. . . . *When capitalism has outlived itself as a social system, when the Socialist system has made its appearance . . . the existence of world socialism cannot be abstracted, and processes developing within the capitalist world cannot be examined only on the strength of its laws* . . . [our itals.—S.A.; J.E.]. The existence of the world socialist system has created new conditions which make it possible to achieve through the working class struggle in the capitalist countries results which go beyond the scope of ordinary reforms."

This theme underlay, one might say, the whole of the discussions; and the practical conclusions drawn from it were again and again and in various forms expressed in terms of the need for an anti-monopolist democratic alternative. Comrade Arzumanyan developed his basic theme in the following terms in the section of his report dealing with the *Upsurge of Class Struggle*: as experience shows, he said, the gains won by the working class do not weaken the pressure of its struggle:

"On the contrary, these gains become a favourable point of departure for fresh attacks against monopoly capital. The more influential the left forces, that put forward a lucid and consistent programme of anti-monopoly settlement of urgent questions of social reality, become in the labour movement, the faster the economic struggle develops into a political struggle. . . . In recent years the strike movement has become closely interwoven with the rapid rise of broad and numerous general-democratic movements embracing not only workers but also progressive intellectuals, students and, in some countries, the peasantry and the middle strata of the urban population. . . . The sharpening of the class struggle in the capitalist world is weakening the position of imperialism . . . the features of the new stage of the class struggle in the capitalist world are embodied in the Cuban revolution, which is the first deep-going social revolution to breach the imperialist front at the new stage of the general crisis of capitalism, the first revolution to raise the banner of socialism in the Western hemisphere.

". . . The Communists are working perseveringly to achieve an alliance with all the healthy forces of the Socialist movement both in the struggle for peace and democracy and in the struggle for socialism. . . . History has made the struggle against the monopolies, for general democratic aims, a very important, priority task of the working people. In the developed capitalist countries, the struggle for the realisation of general-democratic tasks has now become a major component of the revolutionary struggle for socialism. The further convergence of vital economic and political interests of the proletariat and non-proletarian strata of the working people and the growing antagonism between imperialism and democracy are the objective foundation for an ever greater interlinking of democratic and socialist demands, movements, and elements of struggle, which is a characteristic feature of the modern epoch. . . . The political army of the socialist revolution thus takes shape in the course of the struggle for general-democratic demands. The winning of ever new economic and political positions by the democratic forces may, if the revolution develops in this way, result in the transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat supported by broad democratic forces and the overwhelming majority of the nation."

State Monopoly Capitalism

The conclusions drawn from this line of analysis in a number of the speeches were that it was correct to fight for improved wages and conditions of life within the capitalist countries as it was also correct to fight to prevent imperialism from making war and for basic political and economic changes within capitalism. Comrade Timofeyev of the Institute of World Economy put an old issue very simply when he said: "We reject the doctrine of the worse the better."

It would be utterly wrong to confuse the attitude of those comrades who advocated the struggle for progressive reforms, with one of embellishing state monopoly capitalism. The contributions of the Belgian, Italian, Danish, Soviet and other comrades, including our own two contributions on this section of the report, made it clear that there was no disagreement with Comrade Arzumanyan's characterisation of state monopoly capitalism when he stated: ". . . the transition to state monopoly capitalism does not at all signify social progress . . . the development of state monopoly capitalism in itself leads to the spread of monopoly domination over the life of the nation and means that reaction is rising in the economy and politics of bourgeois society. . . . The contemporary bourgeois state has been irrevocably turned into a committee for the management of the affairs of the financial oligarchy." But, he continued,

"the imperialist bourgeoisie resorts to state monopoly measures as the last means of saving capitalism, regarding it as the only possible response to the requirements of the productive forces, as an alternative to socialist economic management. State monopoly capitalism is contradictory because it tries to perpetuate the domination of the bourgeois mode of production by methods conflicting with its private capitalist nature."

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He then posed the question: "Does this mean that there is now no sense in the struggle for nationalisation and that the slogan of nationalisation could be advanced only in a truly revolutionary situation?" To which he replied:

> "No, it does not. With the present development of state monopoly capitalism, alongside the world socialist system the questions of nationalisation appear in a different light and bring out the dialectical contradiction inherent in bourgeois nationalisation. . . . Today, when state monopoly capitalism continues to develop, favourable economic and social requisites have matured for a mass struggle for democratic nationalisation which opens up broad prospects for social transformations leading to the establishment of people's power. Such nationalisation does not go beyond the framework of capitalist relationships, but it becomes a centre of clashing class interests. Nationalisation, even if it benefits the monopolies, is never carried out by the bourgeois state of its own accord, but only when compelled to do so by the masses. . . . The bourgeoisie realises that nationalisation undermines the foundations of the private capitalist ownership, that is why it fights the extension of nationalisation tooth and claw, tries to discredit the very idea of nationalisation, and sell the idea of 'private initiative'. . . . This alone shows that in present conditions the movement for nationalisation has become an important form of the class struggle against monopoly domination."

Similar arguments were developed in the discussion with regard to our struggle for other forms of change within monopoly capitalist society.

Impoverishment

It was clear from the general tone of the contributions that most comrades had little sympathy with what we regard as the "vulgarised impoverishment theory". By this we mean the theory that the material conditions of life of the working class are bound to deteriorate within capitalist society. Most comrades accepted the existence of economic tendencies weighing against the working class but accepted the possibility of political organisation and struggle countering these tendencies as consistent with Marxist theory and born out conclusively by the evidence of history.

However, whilst this attitude was implicit in many contributions the most explicit refutation of this "vulgarised impoverishment theory" came from the speech of the Soviet comrade Lyubimova. And to her theoretical and statistical barrage she added the practical conclusion that "a doctrine that living standards are today worse than in the 19th century holds back the struggles of the workers' movement in the capitalist countries".

Points of Divergence

On the question of state monopoly capitalism, nationalisation, etc., there were certain quite distinct divergencies of opinion. Some contributions were criticised by Italian comrades for example, as suffering from an "objectivism" which painted the horrific features of monopoly capitalism in a picture from which the relation between reality and working class and mass struggle had been abstracted. Henri Claude, from France, whilst not entering into polemics, appeared to characterise nationalisation and other state monopoly capitalist measures in contemporary France as purely and simply machinery serving the interests of the monopoly capitalists.

The most specific divergence of opinion came in the speech from the Japanese comrade Watanabe which presented the issue as follows:

> "Capitalism is bound to grow more corrupt and parasitical and to increase its instability. The argument that the production *relations* can be socialised even within the framework of capitalism in keeping with the socialisation of production, the argument that state monopoly capitalism may be turned into machinery to control monopoly capital through participation and interference of the working class in the bourgeois state—these arguments are the most obsequious subservience to state monopoly capitalism, a theory of gradual evolution to socialism and arguments leading the people from the path of revolutionary struggle to compromise and capitulation. The realities of Japanese state monopoly capitalism demonstrate that state monopoly capitalism will remain machinery for the domination of U.S. and Japanese reaction over Japan, unless the domination of U.S. imperialism and Japanese monopoly capital is overthrown and people's national democratic united front government is established."

The conclusion that was drawn from this was, of course, at variance with the line of thought expressed in many of the contributions to the discussions and also with the report of Comrade Arzumanyan which rejected the contention that "the slogan of nationalisation could be advanced only in a truly revolutionary situation".

(II). THE COMMON MARKET

The discussion on the Common Market occupied the central place in the discussions. From the report, the contributions to the discussion and the reply, emerged a thorough and many sided critique of the reactionary essence of the Common Market. However, since the Theses of the Institute of World Economy have already been published in the July *World Marxist Review* and a summary report in November, we intend

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only to outline those points which appeared to us as fairly new or which arose as issues for controversy in the discussions. What follows, therefore, must not be taken as a balanced account of the conference.

The Common Market is a new form of monopoly and state monopoly capitalist association attempting to answer the challenge and successes of the socialist world. It arises from the new situation facing imperialism after the Second World War—the growth of the socialist system and the victories of the national liberation movement.

The old ways of redividing the capitalist world among the imperialists are no longer open. New forms are needed and the Common Market is itself a form of *group colonialism* by a handful of powers and in particular represents the striving of West German imperialism to extend its world position more in line with its economic power. It is, for example, directed against Britain as the centre of the Commonwealth.

It has, therefore, an exclusive character and only aggravates the conflicts between rival imperialist groups.

But the Common Market is not simply the product of a particular political or diplomatic act. It is also the attempt of the monopolies to use the development of the productive forces (new techniques, specialisation etc.) for their aggressive military-political aims.

The Common Market is an economic and political reality which in turn is bound to produce world wide changes.

Although many provisions of the Treaty of Rome remain on paper and the political union is still a field of intense struggle, certain reductions of tariffs have been carried through even ahead of schedule, import quotas have been practically abolished and there has been a big speed up of monopolistic arrangements.

There was a certain difference of view as to the extent to which the Common Market itself could be regarded as a cause of the economic expansion which has taken place. Sam Aaronovitch, on the basis of data from the August *National Institute of Economic and Social Research Review*, queried this and placed more emphasis on the trade cycle. So did Henri Claude from France. Majority opinion, was, however, that though the Common Market did arise in favourable economic circumstances, it had itself played a part in developing the productive forces. The Soviet economist, Varga, argued that the merging of two industrial economies would not itself produce any growth of the productive forces but there was little agreement with this view.

As an economic and political reality, the Common Market is bound to have repercussions on a world scale. These were not very much considered but we must examine the effect on the world pattern of international trade, the trade of the underdeveloped countries, of the advanced capitalist states including U.S.A. and of the Commonwealth as well as its effect on the trade relations between the socialist and non-socialist systems.

There was no *basic* disagreement on the economic, political and military essence of the Common Market, apart from differences referred to below (about the subordination of West Germany and France to U.S. imperialism). But some important questions arose as to how it should be fought. The discussion made it clear that the Common Market confronted the working class with many new problems and called for new forms and methods of struggle.

How to Combat the Common Market

It created the objective basis (arising from integration) for co-ordinating the joint action of the different national detachments of the working class linked with the development of the working class within its respective countries struggling to isolate its monopoly capitalists, fighting for extension of public ownership and for the formation of anti-monopoly governments. The working class of the six West European countries can and must work in defence of its interests on the scale of the Common Market as a whole. Comrade Arzumanyan referred to the demand for wages and working conditions to be brought up to the higher common standard and that social gains already won by any of the national detachments of the working class of the Six be applied to all the other countries.

As opposed to the division of Europe which the monopolies seek to deepen and perpetuate, the working class propose the co-operation of all European countries regardless of their social systems, without economic and commercial discrimination, without division into military blocs; a peacefully co-existing Europe, a Europe without wars.

In the discussion, the problem of fighting the Common Market was put very sharply by the Italian comrades in their written contribution. They made a strong exposure of the Common Market and emphasised the need to continue opposing it. But they then posed the question: Is it sufficient to demand that the Common Market be dissolved and the Treaty of Rome denounced? They considered that it was necessary to go beyond this demand for two reasons. Firstly, E.E.C. has proved its vitality and has given rise to a

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situation that can be done away with only at the risk of grave repercussions. Secondly, "the Common Market has come into being in response to practical problems brought on by the development of the productive forces". Our task, therefore, "is to reject the solution offered by the imperialist forces rather than to ignore altogether the fact that the problems are there to be solved".

They then stated that:

> "the international working class movement must launch a broad political campaign to change the character of the Common Market. Obviously it does not imply that the struggle against the Common Market may now be conducted with less vigour. On the contrary, this struggle calls for greater efforts to bridle the war-mongers and put up a strong front against imperialism, for recognition of the idea of peaceful co-existence and for broad international economic co-operation."

Pierre Joye, from Belgium, supported the position put forward in the Italian document. The French and West German comrades in their speeches were mainly concerned with exposing the Common Market. The Common Market countries represented were Italy, France, West Germany and Belgium.

The discussion on the fight against the Common Market raised very sharply the *democratic alternative,* which would draw the widest strata into the struggle against the Common Market. Socialism was, of course, the only final solution but we must define on a national and international scale the programme that would develop the broadest democratic struggle. This came up very strongly in the field of world trade and Comrade Khrushchov's proposals on international trade were considered as very important for all countries.

United States and Common Market

The role of the United States in relation to the Common Market also aroused a good deal of discussion. Everyone was clear that the U.S. was the main enemy and remained the bulwark of world reaction for economic, political and military reasons. Nevertheless certain points of difference arose.

Arzumanyan, while stressing the predominance of U.S. imperialism pointed to the uneven development and especially the way in which the Federal Republic of Germany was coming forward, the significance of the Bonn-Paris axis and the emergence of Japanese power as adding to inter-imperialist conflicts. These differences were considered by many comrades in the discussion as important for the working class and democratic struggle.

The Japanese and French contributions very heavily emphasised U.S. domination. The Japanese comrades in their document stated that the "domination of the U.S. financial oligarchy over capitalist world constitutes the main content of the present international 'integration' of finance capital". They depicted Japan as more or less a United States satellite. The French representative, Henri Claude considered that there was no sign of West European independence from the United States; he described de Gaulle's position as demagogic and stated that insofar as there was a difference it was that de Gaulle was for a *more* aggressive policy. Sam Aaronovitch also pointed to these inter-imperialist differences but also indicated the instability—economic and political—of the Common Market and the possibility of explosions that could split it down the middle.

Common Market and Socialist World

Some discussion took place on the significance of the Common Market for socialist world trade. Here again, the discussion took account of the points made by Khrushchov in his article *Vital Questions of the Development of the Socialist World System.* Here, Khrushchov speaks not only of the Communist fight against the consequences of the Common Market but raises the possibility of economic co-operation and peaceful economic competition not only between the separate countries with differing social systems *but also between their economic amalgamations.* He spoke of an international trading organisation which would take in all areas and all countries of the world without discrimination but then underlined another conclusion from the attempt of the imperialists to combine their forces—i.e. the need for the socialist commonwealth to form a still closer union.

The Polish comrade Sokolov in his contribution said that the socialist countries in their exports to the Common Market will face further tariff restrictions and growing discrimination (e.g. on oil) and possibly even trade embargos. Four-fifths of imports into the Socialist world came from West Europe and moreover socialist trade with the capitalist world showed an unfavourable balance. Therefore, there was need for greater specialisation within the socialist world. While seeking to extend trade into new spheres the socialist world should seek to reduce the share of the West in the trade of the socialist world.

In his reply to the discussion as a whole, Arzumanyan dismissed the idea of an economic blockade saying that if it could not be done in the 1920's it would have no significance today. Moreover, though the Common Market could be

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an irritant to the socialist world it was not feared by the Soviet Union.

Out of this part of the discussion, however, the points of special interest that arose were: (a) the basis for an international trading policy that was part of our democratic alternative and of special importance to countries like Britain, the smaller European countries like Denmark, and the newly emergent states such as India; (b) the idea of normal trading relations between an integrated socialist bloc and, for example, the Common Market as an entity; (c) the idea of restoring a single world market, quite different from that of the pre-1914 period, and based on the growth of trade with the underdeveloped and uncommitted countries. In his concluding remarks, Comrade Rumyantsev, who had been overall chairman of the proceedings, spoke of a global market comprising the trade relations between the two systems and developing "its own regularities".

Britain and the Market

Everyone understood and supported the British Party's position on the Common Market and Sam Aaronovitch spoke about this in both his contributions. He expressed the view that the decision of the British ruling class to apply for membership of the Common Market and their determination to join was more than the result of U.S. pressure and the 1961 crisis in our balance of payments. These were indeed the immediate causes but they were *part* of the whole crisis of British imperialist strategy. He pointed out that:

> " . . . the British ruling class now faces a situation where there is a real danger that it may be excluded from the key decisions of the main imperialist powers affecting the future of the system. I think that this, in addition to the belief of the dominant monopolist groups that they can take advantage of the Common Market, helps to account for the change in position. The ruling class, at a crucial point in its history has, therefore, to consider a change in its strategy. U.S. pressure is part of Britain's changed position, but the change in Britain's policy is not just adjustment to U.S. pressure. . . .
>
> "For our Party, the fight against Britain's entry is a fundamental, democratic, national, as well as a class fight. It is our view that we can prevent Britain's joining the Common Market. It depends on the extent of the popular struggle, and here we will be encouraged by every manifestation of struggle against the consequences of the Common Market coming from within the Six.
>
> "A victory for the anti-Common Market forces in Britain would contribute to all the forces fighting the Common Market in Western Europe. It would contribute to the fight of the peoples of the undeveloped countries, of the smaller states against the political, military, and economic blocs being organised by imperialism. Such a victory would not be regarded as a victory for reaction, but for the forces of progress. . . ."

Whether Britain does or does not join the Common Market, there can be no return to old situations and policies. An entire realignment of forces is under way.

(III). THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

It was impossible to take part in such a discussion without it stimulating our thoughts about the situation in Britain.

The Conference confirmed the basic line of our programme *The British Road to Socialism,* but of course much has to be done to work out the next stages in our struggle. At this stage of the general crisis of capitalism, the fight for the development and extension of democracy and a democratic economic policy takes on revolutionary significance.

The struggle for the democratic alternative is essentially two-sided: *against the monopolies, by and for the people.* State monopoly capitalism is the target for attack as the embodiment of policies serving the narrow interest of the monopolies, but the object of this struggle is to raise up the power of the working class and the mass of the people and by their struggle to win the implementation of policies serving their interests, consequently also restricting and restraining the freedom of the monopolies and carrying the movement forward to working class power.

The democratic alternative on each issue needs to take into account the breadth of the alliance of forces against monopoly capitalism—middle strata, small capitalists, farmers, professional workers, intellectuals etc. as well as the industrial workers themselves. It needs to take into account people's aspirations and feelings, what they most want etc. not for opportunist or purely tactical reasons but because the democratic forces which will build the future are the people themselves.

We need boldness in formulating this democratic alternative in every sphere of national life. Naturally, we will need to fight revisionist illusions as to what is possible within the framework of capitalism, but we also need to combat the view that any proposals short of socialism are illusory. Behind the slogan of "refusing to solve the problems of capitalism", this deprives the democratic movement of the means of learning from its own experience of struggle the way towards and the need for a socialist society. It is by struggling within capitalism to make such advances against the nature of capitalism that the contradictions of capitalism are brought into the arena of political

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struggle and seen not as limitations in the nature of things but as limitations in the system of monopoly capitalism. This applies very plainly today in our fight for an integrated system of public transport, for the transformation of our system of education, town planning, housing and urban development etc. Our recent discussion statement on an anti-monopoly policy is a useful contribution towards this.

Further Points

There are four further points we want to raise.

First, our policy on nationalisation. We have a programme for the extension of nationalisation, but insufficient on what we propose now to change in the character of *existing* nationalisation. At a moment when big actions are developing around rails, air transport etc. should we not link more clearly our proposals for defending nationalisation with proposals for working class influence on the organs of administration?

Second, policies for growth and expansion of the British economy. The British working class movement cannot be indifferent to the internal and international position of Britain, the issues of production, productivity, exports, trade etc. These are real questions. We must fight NED and NIC, but we should develop our economic programme so that people can see the alternative we are proposing and which they can fight for now. If we do not do this, then because Britain faces real problems, right wing and bourgeois theories will win certain victories.

Third, the need for an alternative foreign trade policy—still a weak aspect of our fight against the Common Market. We should work out ideas on a many-sided trade programme, including the points on an international trading organisation.

Fourth, we need to pay more attention to the development of international solidarity. We have always recognised the special need for solidarity with the struggles of the peoples of Africa etc. But we need to go into the new situation now arising from "integration" within Western Europe (again, even if we remain outside the Common Market), our relations, i.e. with the working class movements in the Common Market countries, EFTA, and Spain. Such solidarity includes that of the Labour force of the big international monopolies.

Short Shrift for Sterling

Leonard Thomas

THE purpose and operations of the International Monetary Fund are not the easiest thing in the world for the non-specialist to grapple with. Nor is his task made any the lighter by the monetary jargon which bristles in its documents, or by the fact that, at its conferences, what is said in private in the corridors is often more important than the orations delivered at the public sessions. But for all that it is useful to take a look at what happened during its last Annual Meeting recently in the United States.

Two points deserve attention. The first is that the Managing Director of the I.M.F., Mr. Per Jacobsson, raised once again the question of ensuring "the avoidance of deflation at a time of greatly increased capacity in so many lines of production". No-one, perhaps, has in the past expressed greater horror than Mr. Jacobsson at the evils of *inflation*, i.e. the continuous decline in the value of money, the persistent rise in prices, and the general undermining of economic stability. Indeed a number of "under-developed" countries which have received loans from the I.M.F., on condition that they accepted its economic advice, have found that the inflation might be cured, but that, by the same token, their economies ceased to grow and develop.

Mr. Jacobbson remains a stickler for financial rectitude. If he now insists on the contrary danger of *deflation* this is all the more to be heeded. A general deflationary trend would mean that prices were being forced down because of the impossibility of selling the increased output from the higher production capacity now installed. A downward spiral of economic activity could then set in in the non-socialist half of the world, with prices, profits, production and trade all falling away—or at best stagnating. Since the I.M.F. meeting Mr. Jacobsson has once again repeated his warning, and other economic authorities have been saying much the same thing.

Dollar Crisis

The other main point at the I.M.F. meeting concerned the relationships between the main capitalist countries. Here the issues involved were expressed in terms of the currencies, the national

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moneys of the different countries, money being the business of this organisation.

If we go back to the previous annual meeting of the I.M.F., in 1961, the big subject for discussion then was what the members of this organisation were going to do to assist in meeting the crisis of the American dollar. On that occasion the American government repeated its earlier demands that it should receive all necessary help. It argued that the Common Market countries in particular should rally round, since, thanks to U.S. aid, their economies were now strong again, and since America's problems were due directly to its "generosity" in carrying the main burden of Cold War military expenditures and "aid" to the underdeveloped countries.

On this theme the British government did not have much to say. It had, after all, just borrowed the huge sum of £536 million from the I.M.F. to meet the 1961 crisis of the pound sterling. It could hardly ask for any more for itself, and was naturally not enthusiastic to assume new burdens to help prop up the dollar.

The Common Market countries, and notably France, gave the U.S.A. a rather rough handling. Being themselves at this stage in a much strengthened international financial position, they treated the U.S.A. to lectures on the need for each country to put its own house in order, and not just to go scrounging for money from other, and more financially virtuous, countries, to bale it out of its difficulties. Such is the "gratitude" of capitalists for past favours! Having had their say, France and the rest then agreed to set up a new special fund. Subject to the agreement of the participating countries, this fund could be mobilised at some future date if necessary to stop the U.S. dollar plunging down to devaluation.

The outcome of the 1961 meeting reflected pretty accurately the two contradictory aspects of inter-capitalist monetary (and general economic) relations. On the one side each country tries to build up its own strong economic position, with large reserves of gold and foreign exchange, in order to be safe against all international economic storms and rivalries. On the other hand the U.S. dollar is the leading international capitalist currency, and it would be far too risky to allow it to go plunging down. Too much else in the capitalist world might go with it, and capitalism is on trial against socialism on a *world* scale. Grudgingly, therefore, a minimum basis of co-operation and assistance is arrived at.

Since 1961 the U.S.A. has secured more financial help from the West European countries, and largely for this reason its balance of payments deficit has been somewhat reduced, and the dollar has moved up against other currencies.

But the dollar problem is not finally solved. This year, therefore, the I.M.F. meeting was used quite deliberately to produce a propaganda display in favour of the dollar, President Kennedy and others handing out new assurances that all is really well, or on the way to being well, and demanding that people should stop discussing the possibility of a devaluation of the dollar.

Balance of Payments

The British government was now equipped for this meeting with a brand-new economic genius in the shape of Mr. Maudling (recovered, presumably, from the complete fiasco of his E.F.T.A. negotiations). It had also pressed ahead and repaid its 1961 debt to the I.M.F., thus earning the right to speak up again in the meeting.

A particular pre-occupation of the British government was and is with the rickety state of the balance of payments. It sees the danger that if the U.S. international economic position and the dollar now become stronger again, while meantime Mr. Jacobsson is warning about deflation, the outlook for the U.K. is going to be very uncomfortable. With world trade stagnating, the U.K. may be squeezed between the U.S.A. on the one hand and West Germany, France and the rest on the other.

With this in mind, after making due verbal obeisance to the dollar, Mr. Maudling introduced a little tentative, modest sketch of an idea for the improvement of the operation of the I.M.F. Just a thought, he explained, to be chewed over, not a hard-and-fast proposal, and certainly not implying for a moment that the existing schemes for helping the dollar and stabilising the international monetary situation were anything but entirely adequate.

Mr. Maudling's notion was so vaguely put that a number of economic writers have found it necessary to produce long articles explaining what it really meant, or at any rate might mean. With due respect to all this, the idea is quite simple.

When a country, e.g. the U.K., has a deficit in its balance of payments it is, by definition, running into debt to other countries. Up to a certain point other countries will put up with this; the debts of Britain are in pounds sterling, and this is a currency much used in international trade, so to hold some of it is useful. The same goes for dollars, accumulated by other countries when the U.S.A. has a payments deficit, and to a lesser extent for other national currencies as well. But there is a limit. Beyond this other countries dislike adding to their holdings of dollars and pounds, particu-

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larly when they see no end to the process, and fear that these currencies may be devalued, thus involving them in losses. So they try then to present these dollars or pounds back to the U.S.A. and U.K. respectively; in effect this means changing this money for gold out of the U.S. or U.K. reserve. If this happens on a big enough scale then trouble really starts. The countries losing gold start to clamp down on their economies, to reduce imports and force up exports so as to protect their reserves and the position of their currencies. Combined with the threat of general deflation, this could create a particularly menacing position for the U.K.

Dollars Versus Pounds

Mr. Maudling therefore proposed a scheme under which the I.M.F. would take over, as a sort of international banker, these "surplus" currencies (pounds, dollars or etc.) from the unwilling holders, and guarantee their value. The countries depositing such currencies with the I.M.F. could then draw them out later if required, and meantime be ensured against loss. The advantages of this scheme to the British government are obvious, given the fact that Tory policy runs the U.K. into a new balance of payments crisis every three years or so, with each time a new build-up of debts to other countries.

But this proposal brought down the wrath of the American government on Mr. Maudling's head. While paying lip-service to the safety of the dollar, he had in fact raised up the whole idea of *guarantees* being handed out to other countries to persuade them to hold on to currencies in excessive supply, including by implication U.S. dollars. The Americans, however, are trying desperately hard to bully and persuade other countries into holding on to dollars, and not turning them into gold at the expense of the United States' steadily dwindling reserve, nor demanding gold guarantees for them. Secondly, the U.S. government objects strongly to proposals which would publicly and openly reduce the international standing of its own currency, and build up instead the importance of guarantees handed out by the I.M.F. The point here is that after the war the U.S.A. completely bossed the I.M.F., which was really an extension of the American government. But because of the weakening of the U.S. economic position relative to the Common Market countries, this is much less true now.

Not only did the American government blast Mr. Maudling's little scheme, but it showed very clearly that in its estimation the pound sterling now rates nowhere at all, and can go hang. President Kennedy in his speech to the I.M.F. dwelt at great length on the international importance of the dollar as the main currency, and *the* reserve currency of the capitalist world. But he spared not a word for the pound sterling, the other international reserve currency. Previously it had been accepted that the pound does in fact play quite a large role in world trade, particularly because it is the currency of the Sterling Area. If the U.S. government goes out of its way very pointedly to reject this, it is because the Americans propose ruthlessly to put the dollar back in its old powerful position. The underlying calculation appears to be that once the U.K. is pushed into the Common Market, sterling's international position will be weakened because its whole Commonwealth-Sterling Area basis will begin to be cut away. The question for the U.S.A. will be narrowed down to dealing with the Common Market, Britain no longer being an important independent factor in the situation.

No Tidings of Joy

Small wonder, after this brutal treatment, that Mr. Maudling came home with no great tidings of joy, no announcement of any great change in Tory economic policy. The kick in the teeth from America was enough, but on top of this Mr. Macmillan's new chums, the West German and French governments, showed no inclination to rush in and give Maudling's little notion a kindly welcome. Could it be that even in the Common Market, the new earthly paradise of capitalist co-operation and interdependence, the jungle law of dog eats dog still operates?

Neddy may well produce blueprints of how nice it would be for Britain if production were to rise regularly by 4 per cent a year, or even 5 per cent, and why not 6, 7 or 8 per cent, so long as it is just a blueprint! But Mr. Maudling, for the moment at least, knows better. The British balance of payments remains as fundamentally rickety as ever. On top of this Mr. Jacobsson threatens world deflation. Kennedy brushes aside Maudling's plea for a little consideration. The Common Market countries calculate the U.K.'s economic weaknesses, and fix their terms for entry accordingly. The solution of Britain's economic problems is further away than ever.

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Education and Psychology

Brian Simon

This article is based on a paper read by the author at a Symposium on "Education and Psychology" held by the Cultural Committee of the Communist Party in July 1962.

THE question as to the nature of human intellectual potentialities—whether or not there are fixed, inborn limits to human mental development—is a very important one for the Labour and progressive movement generally. Its significance is by no means confined to the sphere of education—to class-room practice and school organisation. On the contrary, this question raises fundamental, political and ideological issues, not only in this country but also in the colonial and ex-colonial countries, which, in the struggle for genuine independence, must seek to develop their human resources to the utmost.

The Educability of Man

It is because Marxists hold the view that potentiality for human mental development—in the long run—is virtually limitless, because we reject all fatalistic ideas about the degeneration of the human race, all theories based on the so-called "normal" distribution of "intelligence" which reflect the class, hierarchical nature of capitalist society, that the Marxist standpoint is that of a true humanism. In taking up this position, Marxists today stand in the direct tradition of the Renaissance humanists, of men like Leonardo da Vinci, John Milton and many others, who saw man as capable of transforming nature to his use, of modelling the future and finally, as the true master of the universe. Fundamental to the humanist outlook is this insistence on the educability of man, this optimistic view of the possibilities of human development. It is this emphasis on man, his achievements and potentialities, as opposed to the gloomy pessimism of the West, that gives to the Soviet Union with its twenty-year plan, much of its attractive power for men and women all over the world.

It is important, therefore, not to lose sight of the wider significance of this question, and to conduct a consistent struggle to uphold the validity of the Marxist standpoint. What does this involve?

First, it involves submitting all theories, such as those derived from Intelligence Testing, which purport to show that human abilities are largely inborn and therefore limited in extent, to the closest analysis and criticism. Allied to this, it is necessary to conduct a consistent struggle against the embodiment of these theories in practice—for instance against the system of streaming and selection in schools which is based on these theories.

Second, it involves close scientific study of human mental development itself, and especially of the psychology of learning and linking the theories so derived to practice.

Psychology of Learning

The first of these is in a sense negative, destructive, critical—involving the exposure of ideas which now dominate practice. It is a necessary activity but it is not enough. New scientific theories must take the place of the old, the incorrectness of which have been shown. This must be the purpose of systematic study of the psychology of human learning leading to new perspectives.

Certainly an important field for the application of these ideas is the schools and education generally. It is here that Intelligence Testing has found its widest application and had its most deleterious effects. It is here, too, that other fatalistic theories, such as those of Freud and the whole complex of ideas around the concept of "child-centred" education, have had fullest play.

Ten to twelve years ago, Marxists and some others (in this country) carried through an effective, *preliminary* struggle against fatalistic ideas, as they were then advocated. Intelligence testing, based on the theory that mental development is determined and limited by heredity on the one hand and environment on the other, was severely criticised. This criticism strengthened our fight for improved opportunities for ordinary children, in particular for the comprehensive school. At this time also we began our struggle against the practice of streaming in the junior school, whereby children are separated into sheep and goats at the age of six or seven according to their supposed mental equipment. We worked, also, on the related questions of the content and methods of education, holding correctly that *what* the child is taught, and *how* he is taught, have great significance in determining his general mental development.

The weakness of our work during this period,

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however, has been that it was found difficult to be concrete on the crucial question of learning. We could maintain that all normal children were capable of learning; we could point to the facts which showed, as the 'fifties proceeded, that more and more children, rejected from the grammar school by the selection test at 11, if given the opportunity in comprehensive or modern schools, could pass the G.C.E. examination successfully and in some cases win places at universities and training colleges. These facts added great force to the criticism of the theories of intelligence testing.

But we had no overall, positive theory of human learning, apart from generalisations based on Pavlovian physiology. Study of Pavlov's findings and theories were, of course, of immense value, particularly in breaking down the concept of the mind put forward by philosophic idealists as, for instance, Sir Cyril Burt, who conceives the mind as consisting of a hierarchy of fixed qualities (or "factors"). But Pavlovian physiology cannot be applied *directly* to education. There is an intermediate phase of great importance. We have, however, had a sufficiently cohesive theoretical basis considerably to strengthen our struggle for the comprehensive school and against streaming—our struggle to raise the whole level of education.

What we need to work towards today is a scientifically grounded theory of human learning. Such a theory would greatly reinforce the practical movement for educational advance—for breaking down 11 plus selection and the 18 plus selection that is now developing. It would be of great assistance, also, in evolving more rational methods of teaching and of inner school organisation. Such a theory of learning could have a wide significance for all aspects of education.

Soviet Psychologists on Learning

In this context a few words may be said on the work of Soviet psychologists, who, for the last thirty years and more have directly tackled the key question of human learning in a co-ordinated and planned way. Their work has been led by a group of outstanding men who have made considerable contributions to our understanding of the process of learning. Soviet psychologists have had their attention directed to the question of the realisation of human potentialities through education because Soviet society, requiring the fullest development of human abilities, demanded such an approach. It would be wrong to ignore this contribution or to brush it aside.

In its emphasis on human learning, Soviet psychology contrasts most sharply with research into the learning process in the West, where such research is based on work with rats, pigeons, octopuses and other animals and is almost entirely separated from education. However, with the first Sputnik in 1957—a potent reminder of Soviet achievements in science and technology and so in education—interest in the Soviet approach to psychology has considerably developed in the West, particularly in the United States.

What are the main features of the work of Soviet psychologists on learning? They may be briefly summarised. First, as already mentioned, the emphasis put on the study of *human* learning (although study of animals is by no means excluded). Second, concentration on a *developmental* approach; that is, study of *how* children learn, through what stages learning proceeds, how different abilities—mathematical, scientific, literary, etc.—are developed (this again contrasts with the static approach of the West, based on psychometry). Together with this, the use of *qualitative* methods—systematic study of the development and learning of small groups or individual children over time—rather than the instantaneous quantitative methods favoured in the West (surveys of the "abilities" of thousands of children by the application of tests followed by statistical analysis).

Role of Language

Third, and very important, Soviet psychologists place great emphasis on the role of language in mental development. Whereas the development of animals is limited by biological factors—by heredity on the one hand and environment on the other—the particular characteristic of human beings by which they differ from all other animals is the use of speech, of language. Language is the means by which man grasps, assimilates, or better appropriates to his use the knowledge mankind has gained in the whole period of his historical development. Through the use of language, in the process of various forms of activity, there are built up in the child's brain functional systems of connections which form the actual material basis for the higher mental functions, abilities, and so on, of which men are capable.

For this reason the fatalistic theory that man's development is determined by the two factors, heredity and environment, as in the case of animals, does not apply in its crude form to man. On the contrary, an entirely new, qualitatively different principle applies here. It is essential to grasp this, since this is the key point in a scientific critique of the new standpoint taken up by the intelligence testers since our earlier criticism (a standpoint that clings to the determining nature of heredity and environment, but simply puts greater emphasis on the latter rather than the former).

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This general approach is well, and briefly, summarised by Professor Luria (of Moscow University) as follows:

> "It is now generally accepted that in the process of mental development there takes place a profound qualitative reorganisation of human mental activity, and that the basic characteristic of this reorganisation is that elementary, direct, activity is replaced by complex functional systems, formed on the basis of the child's communication with adults in the process of learning. These functional systems are of complex construction, and are developed with the close participation of language, which as the basic means of communication with people is simultaneously one of the basic tools in the formation of human mental activity and in the regulation of behaviour. It is through these complex forms of mental activity . . . that new features are acquired and begin to develop according to new laws which displace many of the laws which govern the formation of elementary conditioned reflexes in animals."

It is this analysis which gives rise to what might be called the "educational optimism" of Soviet psychologists and teachers—the understanding, based on scientific investigation, that all children are educable, that all are capable of mastering knowledge. It is this analysis, also, which gives rise to criticism of the theories of Piaget, the Swiss philosopher-psychologist, whose work on children's thinking and concept development is well known; for Piaget *separates* learning from development, claiming that development ("maturation") must always *precede* learning. On the contrary, development follows learning, and is in fact, with certain limits, largely determined by the content of education and methods of teaching. This is a key concept having the widest significance for the practice of education.

Psychology and Education Linked

The fourth aspect of Soviet psychology is the very close link between psychology and education. The purpose or objective of educational psychology is defined as to aid the teacher "by working out the scientific foundations for the rational organisation of the teaching process." Quite new and very interesting methods of research have been worked out and these are used in experimental work with normal children in the ordinary schools—some of these I saw on a visit a year ago. Research is proceeding over a very wide range of educational problems, from those concerned with pre-school and infant education up to the mastery of complex concepts in physics and mathematics. All the leading Soviet psychologists have contributed to this field of work.

It would, therefore, be wrong not to pay close attention to this work which, as it was described to me recently by a well-known non-Marxist psychologist, is on a much bigger scale than anything done in the West, and is well grounded scientifically. It is a fact, as mentioned earlier, that there is a growing interest in the West in this approach —and that an increasing number of the younger psychologists in this country are beginning to seek a way out from the dead end imposed by mental testing—are looking for a more scientific approach to the study of human learning.

We need, therefore, to grasp the nature of this work which is now becoming much more freely available in translation than was the case in the past, and, with our knowledge of conditions in this country and of developments in this field here, to—as it were—transmute it to our use. There is no doubt that it can be of great assistance in tackling both the theoretical and the practical questions that the progressive movement in education is faced with here. Teachers, in particular, are looking for a theoretical support for what they have always known in practice—that, through education, new abilities, new levels of thinking can be systematically developed in children by the use of correct educational methods. There is also increasingly wide scope for bringing new sections of the population into action in the struggle for a genuine education for all—the new Associations for the Advancement of State Education are a case in point. But the effectiveness of such action depends—in part at least—on clarification of the theoretical issues involved and on the development, by progressive teachers, of advanced educational practice.

It is here that Communists have a most important part to play. By making an effective contribution here we can give positive leadership in a sphere which deeply concerns both parents and teachers, and has a wide social and political significance.

Menace of the Miracle

Collet's inform us that *Menace of the Miracle—from Hitler to Adenauer,* by HEINZ ABOSCH, advertised in our November issue, will not be published until January 17th. All orders are being recorded.

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Marxism and Literature Today

Herbert Smith

WHILE recognising the broad, ascendant strength of the progressive movement it is still possible to wonder at the limpet-like persistence of the status quo. Economically it has managed to survive the growth of a powerful trade union movement and culturally it has contained the quickening endeavours of a class seeking its own culture. The methods which it employs at both of these related levels are not dissimilar. At the moment it prefers to engage "in depth", and only when the concessions demanded are too severe does it show its real opposition. It prefers to delay, ignore and infiltrate. "We destroy them in many ways. First economically. They make money. Then . . . they . . . increase their standard of living and they are caught." Such words might concern some recalcitrant trade unionist, but they happen to be Hemingway's, and he is referring to the plight of American writers.

The techniques of the Establishment critics may of course be readily found in Jimmy Porter's "posh" newspapers. The emergence, during the past decade, of a solid amount of working class writing has helped to highlight these critical techniques. There is what might be called the Mandarin Approach, which really marks-time with Dostoievsky and Joyce and remains aloof to present-day realities. Then there is the technique of damning with faint praise. Thirdly, and usually to be found in the Establishment's cheaper newspapers, there is the sensational technique which is liable to inflate a reputation mainly, it seems, for the spiteful pleasure of letting it down or puncturing it with a "he's not so good after all" review some years later. But none of these critics really show any understanding of what has happened in literature; therefore none of them has adjusted his standards of judgement and reference. Perhaps those words of Hemingway's might include such persons after all.

No Coincidence

But at least the faint-praisers and the sensationalists have helped to interest the general public in the new novels. It has remained for the mandarin critics to demonstrate the opposition to real change which is at the heart, or thereabouts, of the Establishment. For surely it is not a matter of coincidence that in their neglect of working class writing these critics share the attitude of their colleagues who, on different pages of the same weekend journals, carefully avoid the reality of any political or economic situation in which the "wrong" forces are involved. The possibility of coincidence in this respect is further weakened by their dogged refusal even to acknowledge at least half-a-dozen progressive masterpieces ranging from Zola's *Germinal* to the novels of Grassic Gibbon. But the last decade has shown-up the poverty of certain prejudices which are not, perhaps, the only things shared in common by these critics and the housewives of Cheltenham Spa.

"Novels about the lower classes are so . . . unpalatable. . . . They have no beauty or cleverness. . . . An element of escape from reality is essential. . . ."

Nevertheless they are now faced with one fait accompli which they can understand; the astronomical sales of "unpalatable" novels and the box office pressures which are released when those works are made into films. Their attitudes to this continue to range from imperious silence to contempt for the "kitchen sink" school.

But this scarcely matters, even to their own sons and daughters, who have shown that they, too, are weary of toothless plays and novels concerning crises conducted at certain income levels and usually occurring abroad or in the more alien precincts of a country house or mistress's flat.

Of greater importance still is the response of people who are supposed to "make-do" with Peg's Paper and Hadley Chase. They read these new novels and see the films inspired by them because such works deal in terms of recognisable people, places and situations.

The box office aspect is important here not so much because of the money involved, but for the decided manner with which it handles the debilitated pleas that "Realism doesn't pay" and "People want to escape from themselves". In fact the British people have shown that they welcome this infusion of working class virility into culture. Only the mandarin critics have cold-shouldered this advance, and in doing so have laid themselves open to the charges of political motives or simple snobbery. For is it conceivable that they prefer the soporific literature which prevailed before these novels arrived? And can it be that they are unaware of the dyspeptic and peevish undertones of their weekly reviews of "acceptable" works?

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So far two main emphases have been mentioned; the first large-scale emergence into culture of the working class, and the refusal of certain critics to recognise that change. It does not follow, of course, that all which has emerged is necessarily good, or that *all* critics are conveniently purblind. (Indeed, some of those referred to below are self-fêted Marxists, and it is reasonable to presume that this belief accounts for much that is forceful and fresh in their work. They have insisted, to the enrichment of the British cinema, on the high values of Italian realist films and have abetted in unique fashion, the rebirth of our theatre. Painting, drama and the cinema would obviously be a great deal poorer without these critics and it is a pity that we have no book-reviewer of the stature of John Berger, Kenneth Tynan and Penelope Gilliat.)

It is surely indicative of the extent of the new literary wealth that this article could fill itself with brief references to the new authors and their works. But as this has already been largely covered by Margot Heinemann in her *Marxism Today* article of April 1962, perhaps a general examination of what has happened would be of more value to the discussion.

The Anti-Hero

The main advance has, it seems to me, been quantitative. It is still unable to show anything as powerful as, say, Jack London, Tressall, Dreiser, early Steinbeck or Grassic Gibbon. The new work carries certain birthmarks, and in view of its difficult and prolonged confinement, there is nothing surprising about that. Nevertheless it is a pity that many young authors have conceded so much to the culture they are challenging. In fact, there are times when their readers must feel that the working class has been admitted to print at the price of making an exhibition of itself. In this connection they probably remember such symptoms as Arthur Seaton's "eleven pints of beer and seven small gins playing hide-and-seek inside his stomach", Vic Brown (*A Kind of Loving*) despoiling a middle-class carpet, Colin McInnes' adolescent (*Absolute Beginners*) peddling pornography, the sex-life of Clancy Sigal's Dimlock, and so on.

There certainly is a tendency, in this new work, to accept the cult of the anti-hero to the extent of depicting every adolescent as a near-criminal or blasé womaniser. Real dignity fidgets on the edge of these works, as do a man's pride in his craft, thoughts concerning the world around him, basic emotions of friendship, hope and fear. The progressive characters described are either dull "squares", or persons dead or dying after having known the glory that was Spain. That there are such characters is not denied; that there are no others is denied by the briefest contact with trade unionists and C.N.D.-ers. The chief offence, surely, is that these novels are a little too preoccupied with the things they patently detest. It is one thing to be in revolt against the sensationalism and amorality of a commercial system, and another to revolt in a sensationalistic and amoral manner. It is suspected, of course, that these faults are, in fact, concessions; the price of publication. It is to their credit that, once having established themselves, these authors often attempt to correct their contradictions (Arthur Seaton's brother in *Key in the Door,* for example). Nevertheless they still lack the dimensions of the major writers already mentioned. The shortcoming is fairly obvious once certain comparisons are made.

It is true that in Britain there is no longer the grinding economic oppression which features in, say, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists,* and it is also true that it was precisely that oppression which gave those works much of their drama. But this does not mean that economic oppression is non-existent—or that it no longer features in our lives. And yet the greater number of these new novels would have it so. According to them there are no strikes; no housing rackets and homelessness; men do not work prolonged overtime in order to earn a decent wage; old age pensioners are not undernourished. It is true that these things do not immediately touch the adolescent, and this could be the reason for his or her prominence in the new novels. If this is the case, then their authors should be on guard against providing a new sort of escapism. The cult of the adolescent anti-hero is no more than that. This might be a phenomenon of our age, but that is no reason for uncritical acceptance. For youth is not in itself an achievement —or a point of rest; it moves toward those realities mentioned above.

Young People in Literature

But the young person as a character in literature is not entirely the prerogative of our modern authors! For instance, Theodore Dreiser's *The American Tragedy* is a massive study of an adolescent duped by a corrupt society and its offers of affluence. When reading this work it is impossible to withhold respect for its lack of compromise, or for the immense dignity with which even the young dupe is treated. And yet it would be difficult to imagine a more despicable character than Clyde Griffiths. It was upon him, nevertheless,

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that Dreiser based his great literary condemnation of American society.

D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is also relevant here, for it is largely concerned with the relationship between a youth and his working class family in Nottinghamshire—a subject and county which have inspired many of our present day novels. In a comparison between those novels and *Sons and Lovers,* both "sides" take points from the other; the former have less snobbery and a keener, if unrealised, interest in social problems and attitudes; the latter has superior descriptive powers, sense of form and, above all, feeling for character. In this respect we should remember the difference between Mr. Seaton, the defeated bully of his family; Vic Brown's father, a miner of slight and sentimental character, and Morel, D. H. Lawrence's masterly portrait of a miner. The final gain is, of course, D. H. Lawrence's—and mainly because of his refusal to confuse sentimentality with warmth, or to present any character who is simply related to a role in society, a family, or to the formal requirements of the novel itself. By quite different methods and for reasons equally dissimilar, we find our sympathies engaged both by D. H. Lawrence's Morel and Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths. It might also be noted that both these characters are men damaged by society; the first by the brutish labour expected of a man in the earlier years of the century and the second by the harshness and Will-o'-the-wisp promises of an America that had not added two world wars to its coffers. This sympathy with a character in spite of his or her shortcomings seems to be the hall-mark of first rate literature. And perhaps our sympathy is engaged because we realise, from our own experience, the degree to which social conditions aggravate the shortcomings latent in us all.

The Majority Exist

It might be claimed that such comparisons are unfair to our present day writers. But such a claim immediately poses the question of *why* they are unfair. And my own view is that a character like Arthur Seaton *deserves* comparison with the best. His failure in that comparison pinpoints both the extent of our advance and the distance still to be travelled. He fails, as do many of the characters in the new literature, because of his lack of warmth, because of a certain destructive quality and acceptance of compromise by his author, and because his attitude to the pressures opposing him is redolent of self-pity.

And yet he represents an advance, if only because of the fact that he has reminded our literary savants *that the majority of the nation exists*! How cunningly the majority of published novels have indoctrinated us into accepting dead conventions, cultivated names, false values and lies by omission! Even now, a stranger visiting one of our libraries would receive a series of impressions involving the public school system, an army composed entirely of the officer class, a nation which never works (unless in advertising) and devotes itself to house parties, studio parties, diplomatic parties, killing parties, sexual gymnastics and the guilt complexes arising therefrom. He might also wonder at the cleverness with which writers tread these confines and arrange them in permutations. He would then emerge into a quite different world.

The New Novel

At least the new novels remind us that men go out to work and tell us something about what they do there. They also remind us that fifty million people do not reside in the Regent's Park area, and that for most of us Nature is also something which has three-eighth nuts and bolts, conveyor belts and instruments. Above all, perhaps, this new work suggests that a beauty also resides in precisely those places which people who are so vociferous about beauty have chosen to pass-by. In so doing they have added effeminate and precious connotations to the word, so that those who hear it and are not part of the game, smile at one another, wink, and are liable to say: "Well, it takes all sorts. . . ." But now they have seen Salfords on the screen and have read about a man working at a capstan lathe. They find art reflecting their own experiences and nourishing itself on the verbal cut and thrust of front room gatherings; the love stories of "ordinary" young people; the humour and quarrels of the council flat and the little house which backs onto the railway. If the word beauty had not been swathed with so many esoteric meanings perhaps they would not be so chary of using it in these connections.

The arrival of the new realist novel, mutilated in some cases by the publisher's reader, was facilitated by the plain mediocrity of the average novel and the challenge to book-sales occasioned by television. Once arrived, its own qualities ensured it a firm place and the next advance was called for. It is a call which as yet remains largely unanswered, for it really asks the new authors to discard finally the literary mannerisms which belong to the authors they have superseded. Violence, sensationalism and self-pity have already been mentioned in this respect—the point being that such things must not exist for their own sakes in a novel; as selling devices or gimmicks. If they are aspects which interest the author then he must endeavour to place them in the context of the

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entire character and his society. It is true that the demand for such balance places a great burden upon the author, for complexity has increased since the death of the great writers we have mentioned. But it is precisely the refusal to accept burdens—and transform them—that has made middle-class literature effete. The new author must not work to the beneficent and well-meaning censor, but toward that condition of which Thomas Wolfe wrote: ". . . never in my whole life have I lived so fully, have I shared so richly in the common life of man as I did . . . when I was struggling with the giant problem of my work."

It could quite well be that in the course of his advance to the next position he will encounter an unexpected opposition, both external and within himself. The attitude of the critics already mentioned suggests that he could quite well be in the position of *knowing* that his work has gained strength and yet having it suffer rejection—at least for a time. And before that point is reached he might come up against barriers within himself regarding the people he wishes to write about. After all, the anti-progressive campaign of the past fifteen years cannot be discounted. It could quite well come between an author and that dynamic which the proletariat possesses (and even such historians as Toynbee recognise: "Against this static condition the secession of a proletariat is a dynamic reaction. . . .") And yet in that direction rests the next real phase of our culture—and of our society.

Politics in Literature

It is sometimes claimed that while Marxism offers writers a sound vantage point for examining the classics and seeing man in his social context, it is often used in order to encourage the writing of dull novels about the Admirable Crichtons of the C.P. and the case for increasing steel production. While such claims have substance and pinpoint another of the obstacles which are being overcome, it must be suggested that this criticism would be more convincing if it were not also the favourite activity of those cultural refugees of the thirties who, having demonstrated their talents in a progressive atmosphere, then consciously chose to stifle themselves in one compounded of American aid and the Establishment's approval.

A dozen articles could set out from the question of whether politics should be implicit or explicit in a work of literature. It is also claimed that Marxists are often guilty of praising the former practice, but encouraging the latter: that, while agreeing with the idea of a novelist dealing with problems in terms of character and situation, etc., they are then quite liable to call for "a little more about the Party". This claim, if conceded, could account for the tendentious quality of "Marxist" novels about steel and cement. It is, perhaps, a case of writers exceeding reality—but not merely to gain thirty pieces of silver. And once more these criticisms would be more cogent if they did not stem from a culture which has its own excesses and has spent so many years evading reality itself. The aim here is not to excuse any sort of defective novel, but to gain that equilibrium with which all discussion must proceed.

One trouble is, of course, that in Britain we have a carefully inculcated mental heritage from feudal times which makes us wish to see everything "in its order and place", even if this means mutilating the thing concerned and deceiving ourselves. But in France and Italy, for instance, the presence of politics and even of political parties seem quite homogeneous in a novel or play. But in Britain we are tempted to partition off things very rigidly and this, more than any over-emphasis of a specific belief, is liable to add a false note to any work of literature.

Talent not Abstract

No-one would deny that the beginning point is talent and that nothing of worth can be constructed without it. Neither can it be denied that any advance of literature will depend not on theories but on actual works of literature. These are truisms; they can be taken for granted. But talent and even genius is not an abstract thing. It, too, sets out from a context—even though it might eventually change that context. In fact it is impossible to recall an important artist who was not part of a general momentum. And it is precisely here that Marxist literary critics have a part to play. They are already showing that they alone are sufficiently interested and sighted to be able to explain the extent of and reason for the barriers which at present mar the work of the new realists. They have been among the first to welcome the break-through which this work represents. But the mandarin critics have turned a cold shoulder. Here, in itself, rests a lesson. But it can only be consummated when it is proven that Marxism is not merely a school of theory, but that its premises are also well able to support a humanistic and dynamic literature. That will indeed mark the next step forward of the British novel.

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Early Crete and Early Greek

R. F. Willetts

CRETAN studies are advancing more rapidly just now than any other branch of Greek studies; and the interest they have aroused outside specialist circles is some measure of their recognised importance for our understanding of ancient society. The advances have been made by the application of three inter-related classes of evidence—archaeology, linguistics and the text of Homer.

In the mid-19th century there were no accepted objective criteria in the form of buildings, pottery, jewellery and armour, which were relied upon to form an independent witness of the material realities of the world which emerges in the Homeric poems. The history of Greece began approximately with the First Olympiad in 776 B.C. Everything that went before, including the Homeric Age, was legend or myth.

Now, what is sometimes described as the Aegean Civilisation has been discovered by archaeology. The objective criteria of Greek pre-history reach back to the beginning of the Iron Age, throughout the whole of the Bronze Age and into Neolithic times. This thoroughgoing change has been effected through the labours of archaeologists and scholars of many nations; but it chiefly stems from the work of two men in particular—Heinrich Schliemann and Sir Arthur Evans. Schliemann rightly said that he had discovered a new world for archaeology. His excavations at Troy, Mycene and Tiryns laid the basis for the later work of others, such as Blegen and Wace, and proved that there was a historical reality behind Homer.

Sir Arthur Evans began to excavate the Bronze Age Palace of Minos, as Knossos in Crete, over 60 years ago. The main excavations were completed during six seasons from 1900 to 1905. In the process Evans virtually discovered the Bronze Age or Minoan Civilisation of Crete.

New Chronology

The work of Schliemann and Evans opened the way to a new chronology. Minoan objects were excavated on Egyptian sites, Egyptian on Minoan. Greek pre-history was thereby synchronised at many points with Egyptian annals, and these have been dated in turn by the Egyptian calendar. The method holds promise of exact determinations, but many difficulties remain.

As early as 1905, Evans had organised the 1,000 years or more of the Cretan Bronze Age into three main periods, Early, Middle and Late Minoan, after the legendary Minos of Crete. Each of these three main periods was subdivided into three—i.e. Early Minoan I, II, III, and so on, with further subdivisions where necessary by means of A's and B's. Evans mainly based his system upon differences observed in the pottery from deposits at Knossos, the principal site of the island.

From the beginning, Evans's Minoan system has been subjected to hostile criticism, chiefly by excavators of other sites in Crete and based upon the problems of correlating deposits from those sites with the deposits of Knossos. But new evidence, from excavations over the past five years, appears to have confirmed the validity of the Evans system to a considerable extent, while allowing for modifications in detail. For example, it is now reasonably certain that the Early Minoan period occupied a shorter space of time than Evans, with good reason, assumed.

The pre-history of mainland Greece begins with a Neolithic Age, which ended about 3000 B.C. In the Early Bronze Age a bronze-using people akin to the early inhabitants of Crete entered Greece from its south-eastern coasts. This people apparently did not speak an Indo-European language. Not long after 2000 B.C., it seems, the first Greek-speaking people entered Greece—perhaps by way of the Dardanelles. These first Greeks of the Middle Bronze Age coalesced with previous inhabitants, just as the Early Bronze Age people intermingled with the Neolithic people. Hence, soon after 1600 B.C., the population was already mixed.

During the Middle Bronze Age there was not apparently much contact between the mainland and Crete. Gradually, towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, Cretan influence became stronger. With the onset of the Late Bronze Age mainland culture adopted and adapted much Minoan culture. The development of a highly organised bureaucratic system at Knossos was matched by an external influence having all the signs of a considerable imperial hegemony in the Aegean, including the Cyclades, Argolis and Attica, perhaps extending as far as Sicily. With the beginning of the second phase of the Late Bronze Age (Late Minoan II and Late Helladic II, 1500 - 1400 B.C.), relations between Knossos and the mainland seem to have been close. But the

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nature of this relationship is still a matter for debate.

With the last phase of the Late Bronze Age (1400 B.C. to the latter part of the 12th century B.C.), Mycenae and the mainland assumed the leadership of the Aegean world after the destruction of the Palace of Minos at Knossos about 1400 B.C. This destruction was thoroughgoing—not only at Knossos, but elsewhere. Indications of its violent character, accompanied by burning, are apparent at a number of other places. At the end of the 12th century there was a transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age, marked by a gradual change in the pottery. This is the time when the Dorians are traditionally said to have entered Greece.

The Scripts

Sudden as was the final destruction of the main Minoan centres, there must have been a prior period of fusion between Minoan and Mycenean cultures in Crete itself. For the Linear Script B, which occurs also on the mainland at such places as Mycenae and Pylos, appears to have been the palace style of recording at Knossos from *c.* 1450 to *c.* 1400 B.C. The reasons for such fusion and for the destruction of the Minoan centres are doubtful. But the results which followed are certainly not. The focus of imperial power shifted to Mycenae, seat of a militarist dynasty which adapted Bronze Age techniques to warfare and enjoyed the brief supremacy immortalised by Homer. The ethnic groupings of Mycenean Society have still to be strictly defined. Nevertheless, the Heroic Age of mainland Greece is symbolised by the Acheans of the Homeric poems.

The various types of script which appeared in the course of archaeological investigation were divided by Evans into pictographic and linear scripts. The linear scripts were further divided into Linear A and Linear B. The Linear A Script appears about the middle of the 17th century B.C., the Linear B Script in the course of the 15th century B.C. Both are pre-alphabetic, cursive scripts; but pictorial signs continued to be used until the end of Minoan times.

Linear B documents were found at Knossos over 50 years ago. About the same time a few examples of the same script were found at Thebes and other places in mainland Greece. But it was not until 1939 that actual tablets like those from Knossos were found in mainland Greece, near Messenian Pylos, and not till after the war that they were found at Mycenae itself.

Before the tablets were found at Pylos, European scholars had made attempts to read the script, without much success. But the discovery of what might be the palace accounts of King Nestor of Pylos provided fresh stimulus. By 1951 the late Michael Ventris had made a tentative decipherment: and then, in collaboration with Mr. John Chadwick, an account of his proposed decipherment was published in 1953.

Linear B

Mr. Ventris claimed (1) that the language of all the Linear B documents is an early form of Greek, pre-Dorian but allied to classical Arcadian and Cyprian; (2) that the script is, in the main, a syllabary, akin to the classical Cyprian syllabary; (3) that by studying how the syllabic signs are used and by inferring the content of documents from certain signs which are not syllabic but ideographic, it is possible to discover the phonetic value of most of the syllabic signs.

Most of the Linear B texts are written on small tablets of clay, apparently containing lists of people, animals and commodities of various kinds. The writing consists, partly of words, occurring singly or in short sequences, sometimes in longer sequences, amounting perhaps to continuous prose. It also consists of ideograms, representing commodities, quantities, values and numerals. Wherever the script is found, signs are virtually the same in number and form, and words, singly and in groups, recur in one place and another. Apparently then one language was used in all localities: conversely, there is no indication of a second language in any locality.

The proposed decipherment of Ventris was accepted by a majority of scholars, but seriously attacked by others. Still others would argue that, even if criticisms based on linguistic grounds had been systematically refuted, the poverty of the documents and the difficulty of their interpretation cannot allow them to be used as yet as historical evidence—which *has*, however, happened on a quite remarkable scale.

The Linear B tablets found by Evans at Knossos were assigned to the Late Minoan II period ending about 1400 B.C. The mainland tablets date to the destruction of Pylos and Mycenae round about 1200 B.C. Yet the writing is the same. Why? It could be that the form of writing was so traditionally fixed that innovation was not encouraged. But in 1958, the excavator of Pylos, Professor Blegen, proposed that this discrepancy in dating might be overcome by a re-examination of the evidence for the Knossian dating at 1400 B.C. A similar approach attracting rather more attention has been adopted by Professor L. R. Palmer.

The new excavations at Knossos have produced no new evidence bearing upon the date of the Linear B tablets. But it is probably only a question

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of time before Linear B tablets are found again at Knossos with decorated pottery of a datable character.

Study of Dialects

The Greeks of historical times learnt many inventions from their eastern neighbours, the greatest being the art of alphabetic writing. (The Minoans before them were similarly indebted.) Though the study of the transmission of the Greek alphabet from its North Semitic model takes us back only to the 8th century B.C., we gain some insights into Greek pre-history from the study of Greek dialects. This specialised study produced a theory which, with slight variations, was accepted over the past half century until recently. It was linked with the premise of three or more waves of Greek infiltration of the mainland. Of these, Doric was the most recent and could be associated with the Dorian "invasion". It was more difficult to postulate pre-Dorian migrations, but most experts favoured the idea of two separate infiltrations—Ionian, and Achaean or Aeolian. From the purely linguistic point of view there are major difficulties in determining the place of Ionic. In fact, the arguments of Professor George Thomson, in 1949, and dialectal studies by Porzig and Risch in 1954 and 1955 led to the conclusion that the Ionic invasion of Greece was a fiction. It is possible then that, round about 1200 B.C. the dialectal distribution was something like this: the Dorians were in the extreme north-west; the Mycenaeans were occupying all southern Greece, perhaps extending as far north as Boeotia; the Aeolians were between them, cutting off the Dorians from the Aegean. The position in Crete at this time cannot be exactly determined, but, according to Homer's *Odyssey*, the population included Achaeans and Dorians and there was a mixture of languages.

Even in antiquity there was dispute whether the Homeric epics had been composed by the same man. Nowadays a view based on the comparative study of epic style in other languages than Greek—including recent epic composition—is gaining ground. On this view, the Homeric poems were transmitted over many centuries by means of oral tradition through the performances of professional minstrels. These performances were at once improvisations and re-creations, maintaining stock phrases and epic formulae. New material was added as they went on being recited in the Iron Age, though in the main they evoked a pre-Dorian world of the Bronze Age. They were finally committed to writing, according to tradition, in Athens, at the end of the 6th century B.C.

Homeric Archaeology

Homeric archaeology is a comparative study, whose object is to interpret the poems in the light of the excavated remains and the remains in the light of the poems. The poems contain descriptions of material objects and social usages, dated by archaeologists to definite periods, early or late, from the 15th to 7th century B.C. The site of Troy, in Homer's account besieged for ten years and finally sacked by the Achaeans under Agamemnon, has been identified by archaeologists with Hissarlik, an ancient settlement near the coast of the Aegean in the north-west corner of Asia Minor, whose remains show the marks of repeated demolition, destruction and rebuilding. Troy VIIa * was the Homeric city: and the Troy sacked by the Achaeans belonged to the same culture as their own Mycenae.

The language of the poems differs from all the known dialects of Greek, spoken and literary: it appears as a mixed dialect. Much study has been devoted to Homeric linguistics and, so far as it goes, its conclusions seem to harmonise with Homeric archaeology. The nucleus of the epic tradition was a heritage from the Mycenaean Age. Transplanted to Asia, after the Dorian invasion forced migration on other Greek speakers from the mainland, it was elaborated, perhaps in the region of Smyrna or Chios, by generations of bards.

Fortified by half a century and more of archaeological discovery, accompanied by intense linguistic analysis, the modern reader of Homer can attend to his author, not merely with pleasure, but with something of the same respect for authority that exalted the reputation of the poet in Greek antiquity. But it is a different kind of authority, the authority, not clearly defined, and often indeed obscure, of an actual historical background, with roots in the late Bronze Age and sometimes harking back to the collapsed Minoan civilisation once centred in Crete. The further study of the Cretan scripts may have important consequences. Firmer links may be established between the middle Bronze Age and the world described by Homer. The limit of our historical knowledge of the origins of Hellenic civilisation could be pushed back a thousand years; and the record of a vital stage of early social development (already admirable in what has been discovered of its monuments) thereby firmly based and enriched.

* Chronology of the successive Troy settlements has been largely based on the ceramic evidence within the general framework of Aegean chronology established by Evans and others. Troy I, II, III, IV, V belong to Early Bronze Age; Troy VI partly to Middle, partly to Late Bronze Age; Troy VIIa and VIIb to Late Bronze Age.

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More on Ancient Indian Materialism

N. P. Anikeev

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DIPAK NANDY'S article "Ancient Indian Materialism" (*Marxism Today*, January 1962) devoted to an analysis of D. P. Chattopadhyaya's *Lokayata. A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism*, is interesting and pithy.

While subscribing fully to D. Nandy's high estimation of D. P. Chattopadhyaya's work, I would like for my part to dwell on certain points concerning research into the history of philosophy, connected with the problems investigated in the book, but which have not received in it sufficient elucidation.

In the first place there is the question of the author's treatment of the general laws of the origin and development of philosophical thought in India. The strong side of the book and its scientific merit is to be found in the fact that the author steadfastly holds to the Marxist principle of materialistic determinism in his analysis of the early forms of Indian philosophy, and reveals their dependence on the conditions of the life of society; he constantly emphasises that the objective world is reflected in human consciousness only by passing through the prism of social relationships and social practice. But D. P. Chattopadhyaya underestimates the fact that, for Marxist research into the history of philosophy, this principle is not sufficient by itself, that it is necessarily supplemented by another principle important from the methodological point of view when analysing spiritual phenomena—namely, the necessity of considering also social consciousness (and above all in forms as remote from its economic base as philosophy and religion) as giving rise to relatively independent phenomena not directly and spontaneously emerging from the character of social relations.

As F. Engels noted, once philosophy has arisen from the mythological consciousness of "the prehistoric period" it acquires a relative independence in its further existence, an inner logic of its own development qualitatively specific only for it and its own content, inherent only to it; and only in the final reckoning conditioned by social-economic reality.

"Prehistoric Content" of Philosophy

True, the application of this general principle to an analysis of Indian philosophy meets considerable and sometimes even insurmountable difficulties, connected first and foremost with the indeterminate or very conditional dating of most of the philosophical material of ancient India. But all the same, facts already known permit us to note the general framework within which philosophy became detached from the mythological concepts of primitive society, how independent philosophical problems took shape and their further development. The separate hymns of Veda, and especially Upanishada, are evidence of this. In them questions about the origin of being, about the first cause, the substance of the world, about the unity of man with it, about the essence of mental phenomena and consciousness and so on, are discussed, i.e. the very same problems as are discussed at a corresponding stage of ancient Greek philosophy.

Of course these general laws of the philosophical process had a number of specific peculiarities on Indian soil. The most important of these was that here the philosophical problems are resolved to a significant degree on the basis of the mythological material of pre-class society, which for a comparatively long time remained their arsenal and breeding ground, their building material so to speak; this is exactly what Engels called the "prehistoric content" of philosophy. And in examining the philosophical systems of class societies, it is quite understandable that an analysis of the specific importance and persistence of contemporary but genetically far more ancient forms of the world outlook of primitive society; a demonstration of how these permeate the developed ideology of later epochs; and even the real content and part played in later philosophical systems—all this is an important and necessary feature in investigating the history of Indian philosophy. In this connection D. P. Chattopadhyaya has carried out much useful work the significance of which it is hard to exaggerate.

However, the book sometimes gives the impres-

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sion that its author sees in this aspect the particular task of research into the history of philosophy. He often reduces the positive content of a philosophy exactly to its "building material", to these residual forms of the primitive world outlook, seeing in them the meaning of philosophical development and not infrequently losing sight of the value, from the standpoint of scientific understanding, of the logical and intellectual requirements of philosophical systems. It is not by chance, therefore, that D. P. Chattopadhyaya devotes little attention to an analysis of the particular philosophical problems of Lokayata, Tantrism, Sankhya and early Buddhism—the fundamental schools considered in the book.

Such inattention to the analysis of the content of these schools' philosophical structure proper is most probably explained not so much by the fact that the author consciously omits this problem, as by the fact that from his position it is very difficult to explain these theories by direct inference from social relations. Thus, for example, it is difficult to agree with D. P. Chattopadhyaya that *prakriti* and *purusha*—the fundamental categories of so developed and comparatively undiluted a philosophical system as Sankhya—are no more than simple analogies of the active role of women and the passive role of men in the agricultural economy of ancient society. Of course, one cannot deny the probability that historically the roots of these concepts go back to the social relations pointed out by the author. But philosophical analysis requires above all that the real function of these categories in the whole philosophical system be taken into account; the conceptual function fulfilled by them; the objective contradictions of the process of cognition of reality resolved with their help; relations of reality which are refracted by theoretical thought through the prism of its own laws and which are assimilated by it in concepts, categories and constructions specific to it.

Outlook of Primitive Society

One cannot fully agree with the author's evaluation of the world outlook of primitive society as exclusively materialistic, or rather protomaterialistic in its basis, even taking into account his constant reservations about the undeveloped and primitive characters of this outlook. On the one hand D. P. Chattopadhyaya quite justly emphasises its link with the practical productive activity of people, its down-to-earth direction alien to any kind of other-worldly aspirations of idealism and religion. But, on the other hand, he underestimates the fact that the views of primitive society, just because of their undeveloped and primitive character, are a distorted reflection of the objective relations of natural and social reality which appear in forms of mystification—totemism, magic ritual, cult rites and so on. "The low economic development of the prehistoric period", observed F. Engels in his day, "had as its supplementation, and at times as a condition and even as a reason, false concepts about nature." (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* Vol. II. p. 474.) So that in evaluating this phenomenon a more careful and flexible approach is needed, and its contradictory and dual character should not be overlooked. The further progress of scientific and philosophical knowledge consisted, by the way, of the elimination of just these early notions of primitive society. And the rich factual material adduced by the author himself confirms this general law of human knowledge, for the rational and scientific ideas contained in the materialistic schools investigated by him, stand opposed in their essence to naive mythological views, although they often appear in their clothing.

Materialism v. Idealism

In this process the decisive role belonged of course to materialist teachings, but one cannot deny (which seems to be the standpoint of D. P. Chattopadhyaya) the definite part played in the process also of idealist teachings, as witness for instance the Upanishadas, in opposition to the ceremonious rites, ritualism, sacrifices and so on. Of course this does not exclude the fact that idealism, as the author justly shows, provided in essence the theoretical foundation of religion, and in one or another form came in the end to recognise all this cult of ritual as *karma-marg* (way of action)—the lowest path of attainment of god through action, as distinct from the higher path *jñana-marg*—attainment of god through knowledge.

Moreover, while correctly noting the antithesis in principle between the social and gnoseological roots of idealism and those of materialism, D. P. Chattopadhyaya often interprets this antithesis somewhat one-sidedly. Thus sometimes he gives the impression that, in linking materialism with the matriarchal relations among the indigenous Dravidian agricultural population in India, and idealism with the patriarchal relations of the Veda Aryans, he distinguishes these trends in a vacuum, and transfers the struggle between them from the inner-philosophical sphere to the external sphere of mutual relations between two different ethnic components of the Indian people; in other words, he to some extent covers over the class nature of

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these trends and substitutes for it a cultural, ethnic and racial content which only in part coincides with the social. And it cannot be denied that materialistic views also were propounded in the Aryan environment, while idealism and religion found a place too among the Dravidian agricultural population. In reality the struggle between idealism and materialism is of a much more complex and contradictory character, appearing often simultaneously in the struggle of different currents within the framework of one and the same philosophical school.

Despite the fact that not all questions are elucidated with equal convincingness in the book, it should all the same be evaluated positively as a whole. The book attracts by its broad grasp of factual material, by its bold formulations and deep scientific analysis of many fundamental problems of Indian philosophy, by its critical approach to the dogmas established in Indology, and by its polemical fervour. D. P. Chattopadhyaya's work is a serious contribution to the Marxist study of the history of Indian philosophy. In conclusion it is important to note also that the author relies widely on works of such Marxist research workers in ancient Indian history as S. A. Dange, D. D. Kosambi and others. He fruitfully uses the work of the progressive English scholars, G. Thomson and Needham, who likewise are striving to approach the history of the ancient world from materialist positions. At the same time the results of the investigations of D. P. Chattopadhyaya himself strengthen and fortify the conclusions of these scholars, which bears witness to the establishment of a united front of Marxist scholars from different countries in the study of the ancient period of the spiritual development of mankind.

Discussion contribution on:

The Liberal Revival

Horace Green

JACK DUNMAN in his reply to Bill Wainwright's "The Liberal Revival" (*Marxism Today,* October 1962) seems to me to be both superficial and sectarian. He should not only re-read Wainwright's article but also the article by John Gollan on *New Political Developments* printed in the May issue of *Marxism Today*.

In fact, his comment that the "strength of his own feelings on it is no doubt partly due to a number of personal contacts with one or two leading Liberals in recent years" reflects this. Surely on that basis no-one could seriously say that the views they were putting were "deeper analysis".

In his May article John Gollan asked "What are the main factors making for change in British politics? What is new and developing?" It is with this question in mind that, I think, one needs to see the situation as fluid and flexible, and the "Liberal revival" as a reflection of this. The growth of the Communist Party, too, is part of this, and a *key part*. For, as Gollan said:

> "Liberal policies are of course capitalist policies, but in the absence of a clear challenging alternative policy from Labour to that of the Tories, they are finding a response. They appear to speak for the discontented. They attack monopolies and the iniquities of wage restraint. They demand that Britain should give up its nuclear bomb."

It should be noted, too, that in the Cuba crisis week Jo Grimond came out with a much more progressive line than Gaitskell.

See Beyond the Leaders

It is because of all this that we need to see *beyond* Liberal leadership and policy to people seeking an "alternative" and not only seeking an alternative policy but willing to act upon it. This itself has some significance, for we know in recent years how strong the argument of the "split vote" has been (and that of the "wasted vote" too) in stopping electors from voting for "what they want".

People are looking for a change, and it is true that to look to the Liberal Party for such a change is an illusion. But for us the significance and challenge is the breaking up of the political situation in Britain, and, as Gollan said: "The greatest danger facing Communists at the moment is that they should fail to grasp this."

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Above all we need a positive approach. We can agree with differentiating between Liberal Party policy and leadership on the one hand and the rank and file support they are attracting on the other. In just the same way we need to do this in relation to the Labour Party, bringing its members into unity and action on issues that we can agree upon. We need to present our alternative policy and to show the key role of our Party, not as something in conflict with winning unity with non-Party people but as a principled part of it.

Jack Dunman's approach is both rigid and sectarian. He almost insists on opening the gap between us and the people who form the basis for the Liberal revival instead of working to win them to a deeper understanding of Britain's political position and way forward. Such an approach can only serve to drive the Liberal rank and file closer to the leadership whom we challenge. Jack says he is not "accusing liberals of being fascists", but that is precisely what he is asking us to do.

I also disagree with him when he says that all comparison of the Liberalism of the 1930's with the Liberals today leads one to decide that those of today "are enemies of the working class and democracy". Liberal leaders in the 1930's were not pillars of democracy either. The situation today in the 1960's is, of course, not that of the 1930's, but there are genuine similarities. Then as now, capitalism is in crisis, there are sharpening political and economic struggles, a growth of democratic and political activities which affects the industrial working class and is beginning to stir the professional and white collar workers.

Radicalism in Britain, with its roots in traditions of "tolerance", progressive thought and political freedom, plays a part. Of course there are dangers in movements becoming anti-Marxist, in leaders without principles or policy being thrown up, but our task is to differentiate between leaders who are making use of a situation and the rank and file who are being moved by it into struggle.

Monopolies and Books

J. N.

THE Party statement on Monopolies* assumes that retail price maintenance is in itself an imposition on the consumer and that "by means of this device extortionately high prices (in comparison with their cost of production) are maintained for most consumer goods". I believe this to be untrue of many consumer goods, and my experience of the book trade convinces me that it is untrue in that branch of retailing.

What are the facts? In the book trade, so far from wholesalers and retailers wanting to be "allowed to sell at whatever retail price they please" (and incidentally wholesalers from their nature do not sell at retail prices), all booksellers are unanimous in supporting price maintenance as expressed in the Net Book Agreement. This agreement, which dates from the end of the last century, put an end to nearly 50 years of book price-cutting which had led to the disappearance of many good booksellers, and to the general adulteration of a trade which has a special intellectual and social as well as a merely commercial place in all countries.

The Net Book Agreement states that publishers agree collectively to maintain their prices on those book which they sell at net prices. No restriction is placed on non-net books—usually school text books bought in quantity for class use—nor is there any restrictive agreement among publishers as to book prices, as has been notorious between producers in other industries. Publishers individually fix book prices on the basis of their production costs and the size of editions. Prices obviously must be kept roughly in line with other books of the same kind; a novel is unlikely to sell at 25s. when similar books are retailed at 16s.

Booksellers are wholeheartedly in favour of fixed prices, for experiences at home in the past and in the present abroad in those countries where there is no price maintenance have shown that price-cutting has had a disastrous effect on bookselling. The best example is U.S.A., where bookshops with reasonable stocks and knowledgeable staff are practically non-existent. A free-for-all leads to stores and other non-bookselling concerns using books as "loss-leaders" to induce people in to buy a few best-sellers, but do not otherwise stock books.

Relevant to the case are the arguments put up by all sections of the book trade in the recent case before the Restrictive Practices Court. Publishers and booksellers alleged that price-cutting would lead to (a) higher not lower book price levels.

* *Marxism Today*, July 1962.

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This would come about partly owing to the desire to restore to the bookseller the margin clipped by price-cutting, and partly because the fear of price-cutting would lead to less stock-holding and smaller pre-publication orders, on which publishers rely. As a result smaller editions at inevitably higher prices per copy would follow. This would lead to a price spiral, with fewer people able to afford the higher prices (b) fewer titles being published, owing to smaller chances of distribution and sale. This would particularly affect books of minority appeal and here, surely, would be included works of importance to the Party and to progressive intellectuals and workers; and those published would be dearer.

The suggestion in the Party statement—echoing the views of Tories, Liberals and Right-Wing Labour—that retailers are making excessive profits is certaily not true in the bookshops. Independent examinations of their finances have revealed the very low rate of profit made. Nearly all booksellers who are prosperous rely upon other sources, such as printing, publishing or the sale of stationery and fancy goods. This trend is increasing, and the tendency is for retail bookselling to decline. Possibly in some trades alternative distribution methods will be developed, but whereas price cutting of books might lead to a widening of outlets for a few titles, it would not lead to an extension of stock-holding retailing in a trade with 150,000 books in print at any one moment.

In the Socialist countries, where demand for books outstrips supply, booksellers have a 25 per cent discount off retail prices; in Britain the average is about 27 per cent, with a far smaller rate of turnover. In the old days of book price-cutting the usual discount on marked prices was 25 per cent off the (raised) marked price. At present price-levels the Co-operative Movement, which incidentally has only slightly increased its interest in book retailing since the last war, could certainly not afford price-cutting as well as the payment of dividends.

Two general points arise from the particular. In condemning price-fixing generally do we distinguish sufficiently between producers' cartels and price-fixing agreements and fixed-price selling in retail shops? Secondly is not price-cutting a weapon of the large multiple firms with enormous resources against the small shop-keeper? And is it not our policy to support the small retailer against the monopolies and multiples?

The new-found enthusiasm of the Tories for "outlawing" retail price maintenance and "freeing" prices is as suspect as any other form of Tory "freedom". It is not only demagogy, but a skilful plan to shift their own responsibilty for the rising cost of living onto other shoulders, and at the same time to strengthen the large concerns against the small trader. Everyone has now seen through the "twopence off" tricks of the detergent manufacturers; it is the same with other goods.The "low mark-up" in the cut-price stores on certain branded goods is countered by a "high-mark-up" on other goods. Everyone in the Supermarket business knows this. The most enthusiastic advocate of price-cutting, Professor Yamey, only claims that consumers might save 5 per cent over all. The only genuine price-reductions to the consumer under capitalism in the long run are by way of the dividends paid out by the Co-operative Movement.

The Fight Against the Monopolies

Michael McCreery

THE anti-monopoly campaign outlined in the document drafted by the Economic Committee, and approved by the Executive Committee (*Marxism Today*: July) raised a number of important questions. It is very necessary that a plan of attack be drawn up by the Communist Party to mobilise all sections of the people against monopoly capital. But I cannot agree with the way it has been done in this document.

The aim was to outline a series of measures, which would, if achieved, "strengthen the hand of the people and temporarily weaken to some extent the power of the monopolies". These measures would lie short of socialism, in the sense that even if they were achieved the "state monopoly capitalist framework" would still remain intact; and it is this "which the British people must destroy if they are to control their own destiny".

In other words, the documents aimed at outlining a programme of *democratic* advance against monopoly capital, for a stage of the struggle *prior* to the final overthrow of monopoly capital. To draw up such a programme of democratic

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demands is not, of course, to argue that all of them can and will be achieved so long as monopoly capital retains state power; only that their achievement is *compatible with* the continued existence of state monopoly capitalism.

But before examining these demands in detail, one or two general comments. Firstly, we should be cautious about the extent to which democratic advance can "weaken the power of the monopolies", even "temporarily", so long as the framework of state monopoly capitalism remains intact. The struggle for democratic rights in Western Europe since the 2nd World War has taught us this lesson.

For example, the Labour victory in the 1945 General Election in Britain was followed by substantial measures of nationalisation, improved social services, and some anti-monopoly legislation. But the political *power* of the monopolists was not weakened to any important extent. The monopolists *as a class,* retained their hold over the machinery of state and were thus able to gear the policies of the nationalised industries to suit their own needs. The home and foreign policy of the Labour government faithfully represented the interests of monopoly capital—wage-freeze at home, colonial wars abroad to maintain British imperial interests.

Whatever may be the prospects for winning concessions from the capitalists in the 1960s we should not equate such concessions with the weakening of monopoly capital's political power.

There are also, I believe, dangers in presenting the democratic struggle as one directed against "the monopolies". The main enemy of the British people is not "the monopolies", but state monopoly capitalism. If we focus attention upon "the monopolies" (those industrial and financial giants who dominate the economic life in Britain) then inevitably we tend to see the struggle in *economic* terms—restriction of the *economic* power of the monopolists as the main immediate task. And from this position we can all too easily slide into regarding the removal of the monopolies from the *economic* scene, via nationalisation, as the way in which the working class will transfer *political power* into its own hands.

Smash the Capitalist State to win Power

Is this weakness not revealed in the following statement in the document (page 202)? "In the course of the anti-monopoly struggle we must win the mass of the people to an understanding that the power of the monopolies can only be completely broken by an advance to public ownership." But Parliamentary majorities, and economic measures, in themselves, will never break the power of monopoly capital. To achieve this the capitalist state, with the armed forces at its centre, must be broken up, smashed.

But to return to the "anti-monopoly" programme. There is in the general analysis preceding the detailed proposals, an apparently small, but, I believe, fundamental error. I quote from page 199. "Even today liberal and conservative economic literature often describes the position as if it were a case of monopolies being an exceptional, though dangerous, feature in an otherwise healthy system; hence their various proposals to increase competition and make the system work 'normally'. . . . We believe that on the contrary, *it is the monopolies which are the basis of the capitalist system in its present stage* [my italics, M.McC.] and which, to a large extent, determine its development."

To describe the monopolies as the *basis* of the capitalist system in its present stage is to argue that Lenin's analysis in *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism,* is out of date. He wrote, "As we have seen, the most deep-rooted economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly. This is capitalist monopoly, i.e., *monopoly which has grown out of capitalism and exists in the general environment of capitalism* [my italics, M.McC.] and remains in permanent and insoluble contradiction to that general environment."

This statement holds good for today. Monopoly capital is still only a fraction of total capital in Britain today. Monopoly still exists in the general environment of capitalism. But competition inevitably creates monopoly. Lop off one of the Hydra's heads and another will soon grow to take its place. Monopoly is the product of the capitalist system. Monopolies crown and dominate the British economy today, but they do not form its base.

Why is this error vital? *Because if monopolies are the basis of the capitalist system then to break them up is to break up capitalism itself.*

However, breaking up the monopolies, far from being a step in the direction of socialism, is only a restoration of competition. Lenin quoted Hilferding with approval. "It is not the business of the proletariat to contrast the more progressive capitalist policy with that of the now bygone era of free trade and of hostility towards the state. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance-capital, to imperialism, cannot be free trade, but socialism. The aim of proletarian policy cannot now be the ideal of restoring free competition—which has now become a reactionary ideal —but the complete abolition of competition by the vanquishment of capitalism." Lenin then says,

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"Kautsky departed from Marxism by advocating what is, in the period of finance capital, 'a reactionary ideal', 'peaceful democracy', 'the mere operation of economic factors', for *objectively* this ideal *drags us back from monopoly capitalism to the non-monopolist stage, and is a reformist swindle*" [my italics, M.McC.].

The Economic Committee's document, having slated "liberal and conservative economic literature" for aiming at "increasing competition", then proceeds to advance proposals which have the very same aim!

A number of "main ideas" are listed, and then follow the practical proposals which embody these ideas. First and foremost is the idea that we must "expose the monopolies. . . . To deny the people knowledge of the facts concerning the monopolies is to deny their right to democratic discussion of national economic policy." Most of the proposals embody this idea. The present Monopolies Commission is to be enlarged and charged with collecting and publishing "the fullest information about all large firms", their costs of production, price policies and profit margins, and their cartel agreements with each other, both nationally and internationally. A Select Committee on monopolies is to be set up by the House of Commons, in order to "review all aspects of the question of monopolies, to issue regular reports and to work out practical measures to deal with monopolies."

Four further proposals are really means of assisting the Monopolies Commission and the Select Committee to produce the facts about monopoly. Firstly, a National Consumers Council is to be set up to investigate retail prices, quality of consumer goods and profits earned by the firms producing them, with the "power to make representations for legislation to the Select Committee on Monopolies". Secondly, a National Housing Committee to do much the same job for housing. Thirdly, publication of full details of all public orders placed with private firms, particularly the huge contracts offered by the Ministry of Defence and the nationalised industries. Fourthly, publication of costs and profit margins for all goods sold to the farmers by the monopolies (e.g. machinery, fertilisers, feeding-stuffs).

All these proposals are most useful. We can hazard a guess that they will reveal that the monopolies are more efficient and earn higher rates of profit, in general, than competitive capital. But then, the question arises, along what lines do we intend "to work out practical measures to deal with the monopolies"? Are we to aim at restricting, containing, and breaking-up these *more efficient* firms, at returning to competition, or are we to aim at taking them over in the interests of the people, at socialism? Do we present a reactionary or a progressive alternative to monopoly?

The next "main idea" which the document outlines, and the practical proposals in which it is embodied, give us the answer. The idea is this. "Put obstacles in the way of the further growth of monopoly. The continued further concentration of economic power, and with it political and social power, is a menace to the people, and negates the genuine advances towards a more democratic society that the people have won by their struggles." Now what should be deduced from the continued concentration of economic and political power is the ever more pressing need for the people to win this power from the monopolists. But in this document we are given the "aim for the immediate future, of putting "obstacles in the way of the further growth of monopoly".

Fight for Socialism not for More Competition

If this idea is embodied in any concrete proposals they must aim at putting back, or at least stopping, the economic clock. And, sure enough, three proposals which follow attempt just this. Firstly, "No take-over bid, merger, or amalgamation should be concluded without first submitting full details to the Monopolies Commission, *which should in general not permit any take-overs if they lead in the direction of monopoly*" [my italics, M.McC.].

But *all* mergers lead "in the direction of monopoly", and *nearly all* mergers take place under the pressure of competition, national or international, actual or threatened, so as to increase the efficiency and competitive power of the merged firms. Economies of scale can be obtained in a variety of ways. In general productivity per worker rises.

So with this proposal we take our stand *against* the more efficient firm, and *for* the less efficient firm. It is a reactionary proposal, and, not only that, ineffectual. For, so long as the state monopoly capitalist framework remains intact, nothing that the working class can say or do will check the inevitable development of capitalism "in the direction of monopoly".

Of course, we oppose all adverse consequences for working people which result from such mergers. And this leads to the document's second reactionary proposal. "The Trade Union Movement should intervene and resist all take-over bids and mergers which threaten closures or redundancy among the workers." But most mergers "threaten redundancy", so again we are called upon to resist mergers in general, and again, we can resist until we are blue in the face, but we will not be able to check them.

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Presented in this way the fight against redundancy is being sacrificed to the vain fight for competition. For what *can* be attempted, with some prospect of success, even under capitalism, is direct resistance to the unemployment likely to result from the merger. The Labour movement could unite the great majority of the British people in a campaign for full pay for all those declared redundant until alternative employment has been found for them (with no loss of pay), either by their own firm, or by the state. The strong sympathy which has been evoked, even among the middle classes, in support of recent strikes for the *right to work* is evidence that such a campaign could bring pressure to bear upon the monopolists, and compel them to take action probably via the state.

The third proposal to embody this "reactionary ideal" reads: "Where technically feasible monopolies, or near monopolies, should be broken up. This could apply to some newspaper chains, the system of 'tied' businesses in public houses, or filling stations and chain stores." It is "technically feasible" to break up many combines. The question is, will the net result be a gain or loss, in efficiency? For example, it is technically feasible to break up Woolworth's and Marks and Spencers', and Sainsbury's and Boots the chemist. But who would gain? Not the working-class housewife, who saves when she buys at these stores rather than from the small shopkeeper. For their prices are often lower. And why? Because the chain stores are more efficient. They can undercut the small shopkeeper and still make a large profit.

But if the chain stores are broken up these economies of scale will be lost. This is not the way forward. The progressive alternative is to run them in the interests of the people, and not for the greater profit of Messrs. Sainsbury, and Spencer. Socialism is the progressive alternative to the chain stores, not a return to more competition, out of which monopoly will inevitably grow once again.

There are only two further proposals for action in this "anti-monopoly" campaign. The need to strengthen the co-operative movement is stressed. And the abolition of retail price maintenance is proposed. Both are positive, but neither involves direct action against monopoly capital. (One might note, in passing, that the abolition of retail price maintenance would strengthen the chain stores at the expense of the small shopkeeper, who would be undercut even more frequently than at present. How has it slipped into this programme?)

Need for a Comprehensive Democratic Programme

Where direct action against monopoly capital is proposed in this document the general line is clear. It is for the maintenance and restoration of competition. This backward-looking programme represents the wishful thinking of the petty-bourgeoisie and the competitive capitalists, not the interests of the working class. There is no mention of the need to maintain and advance real wages; no mention of the need to win economic concessions from the state in the form of improved social services; no mention of the need to reform the constitution (abolition of monarchy and Lords, proportional representation, etc.); no mention of the need to maintain and advance democratic rights of assembly, organisation and free speech. But all these, and more, should be included in any comprehensive programme of political and economic advance against state monopoly capital.

Such a comprehensive democratic programme which should be presented alongside, but distinct from, our socialist programme, would draw the working class into action because its aims are in their interests. And not theirs alone. As the working class moved into action wider and wider sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, the middle classes, even the competitive capitalists, could be drawn into the struggle alongside the workers. The small shopkeeper would gain more from an advance in the real wages of his customers than he would from the break-up of the chain stores. The doctor would gain more from an improved Health Service than he would from a restoration of private practice. The small- and medium-sized firms would gain more from alliance with the working class than they would from an attempt to join with monopoly capital in intensifying exploitation of the people, for monopoly will squeeze competitive capital before it challenges the more powerful Labour movement.

In short, in the course of struggle against state monopoly capital, all other classes can be won to *abandon* those of their class aims which are reactionary and to throw in their lot with the working class. In this way the monopolists can be isolated prior to their final overthrow. For it becomes clearer each year that what stands in the way of realising even these democratic aims is the political power of monopoly-capital—their hold over the machinery of state—and that until this political power is smashed, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat established, *no* democratic aim is secure.

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